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Macbeth

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A. W. VERITY

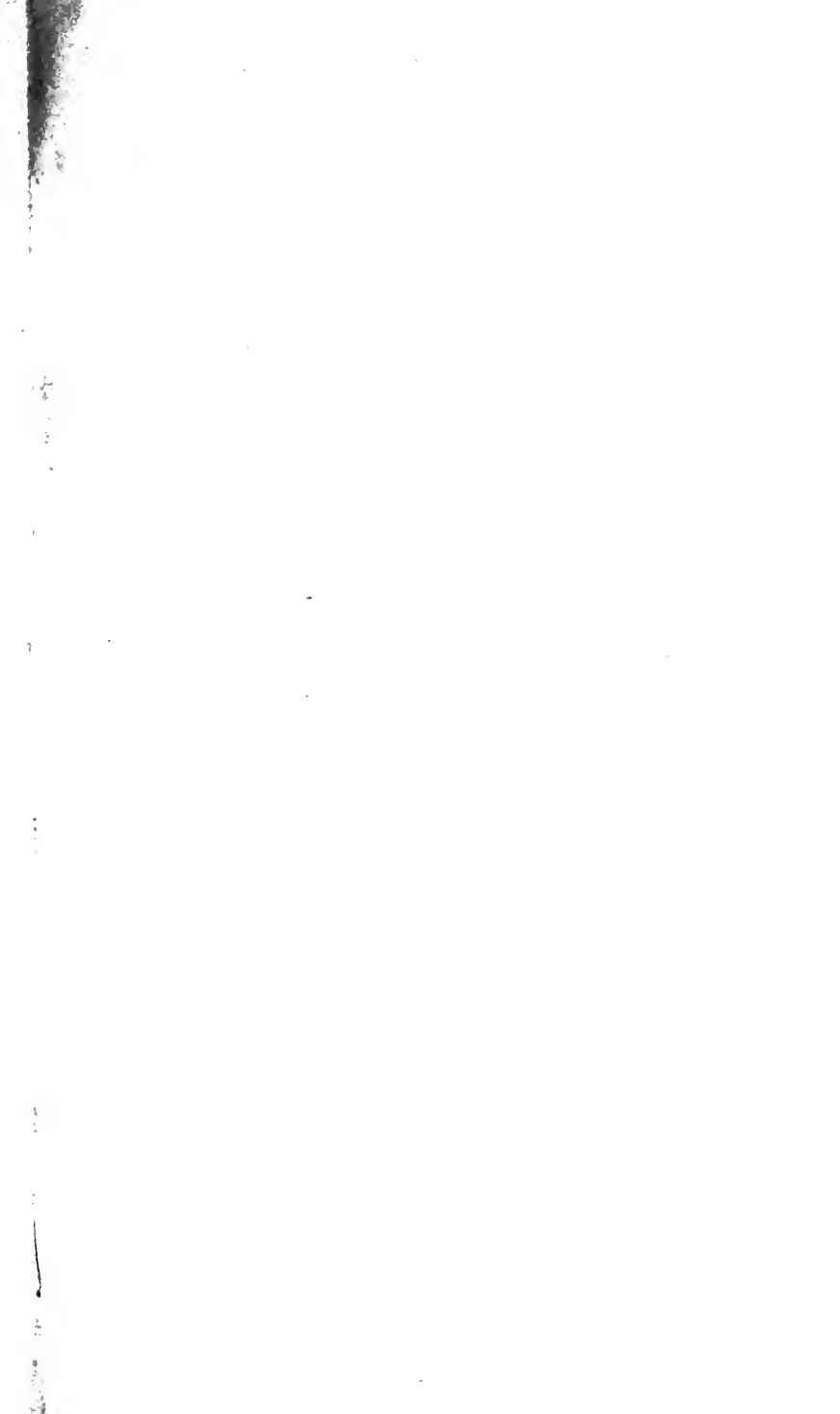


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The Pitt Press Shakespeare for Schools

# MACBETH

EDITED

*WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, GLOSSARY,  
APPENDIX AND INDEXES*

BY

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## PREFACE.

I HAVE the pleasure again to record my great obligations to Dr Furness. It would be impossible to estimate what this volume owes to his incomparable Variorum edition of *Macbeth*. The letter "F" at the end of a paragraph means that the note is based entirely or mainly on materials quoted by Dr Furness from other editions, not that it represents necessarily his own views. Minor, unspecified obligations to him are, I hope, covered by this general acknowledgment here—an acknowledgment which I wish to be as full and emphatic as words can make it.

Apart from my general indebtedness to standard works, I must also mention the very considerable help I received from one of the readers of the University Press, who compiled the indexes and verified innumerable references and quotations.

A. W. V.

*October, 1901.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

## I.

## DATES OF THE PUBLICATION AND COMPOSITION OF THE PLAY.

*Macbeth* was first published, so far as we know, in 1623, in the first Folio<sup>1</sup> edition of Shakespeare's plays, where it is placed between *Julius Cæsar* and *Hamlet*. The play was evidently printed from a faulty—probably, in part, a dictated—copy of the original. As will be seen from the Notes to this edition, there are many difficulties of reading, and at least one notable confusion in the stage-directions (v. 8. 31).

The composition of *Macbeth* is commonly assigned to the period 1605—1606. The evidence<sup>2</sup> bearing on the point is unusually full and interesting. It is as follows:

A sort of diary or note-book in MS., entitled *The Booke of Plaies and Notes thereof*, of an Elizabethan physician,

<sup>1</sup> The first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays, and the earliest authority for the text of many, e.g. *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *Julius Cæsar*; indeed, but for it they would be lost. It is often referred to by editors simply as "the Folio." The 2nd Folio (1632) was a reprint of the 1st, correcting some of its typographical errors, and introducing some conjectural changes which are often quite unnecessary. The later Folios have little value or interest, except that the edition of 1664 was the first to give *Pericles*. Where in the Notes to this edition of *Macbeth* the "1st Folio" alone is mentioned, it may be taken for granted that the others follow it.

<sup>2</sup> It is all given by other editors.

Dr Simon Forman, shows that he was present at a performance of *Macbeth* on April 20, 1610. His account, therefore, furnishes a limit in the one direction<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, internal evidence indicates very clearly that the play was not written earlier than 1603, the year of the accession of James I. to the English throne. The Scottish subject and its treatment in one noticeable point<sup>2</sup>; the general Scottish colouring of the whole work; the specific allusion to James I.'s accession and the union of the two crowns (IV. I. 120, 121):

“And some I see

— That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry;”

the equally clear allusion to his exercise of the regal “healing benediction” or hereditary practice of “touching” for the “King’s Evil” (IV. 3. 136—151); the prominence given to witchcraft<sup>3</sup>: these aspects and features of *Macbeth* associate it beyond dispute with the accession of Elizabeth’s successor.

Hence ‘not earlier than 1603 and not later than 1610’ is a formula which may be accepted with absolute confidence as regards the question of the date of *Macbeth*. But we can narrow the issue closer. The following words in Middleton’s play, *The Puritan*, IV. I (published in 1607), have every appearance of an allusion to the introduction of Banquo’s ghost in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the characterisation of Banquo, James’s supposed ancestor.

<sup>3</sup> “The repeated references to witchcraft are similarly inspired” by a desire to do compliment to the King, “for it was a subject in which James had a peculiar interest. In 1589 the fleet in which he was bringing home his bride, Anne of Denmark, had been dispersed by a violent storm, and, in the belief that this was due to sorcery, he had taken vigorous proceedings against witches. In 1599 he had published his tract *Demonologie*, maintaining against sceptical attacks the reality of possession by evil spirits, and in 1604, the year after he came to the English throne, a new statute was passed against witchcraft. A play in which witches gave awful proof of their malign power would thus be peculiarly attractive to a monarch who believed himself to have been the victim of their baneful influence”—*Boas*.

*Macbeth*: "instead of a jester we'll have a ghost in a white sheet sit at the upper end of the table."

Further, two passages in *Macbeth* itself point to 1606 as the year of its composition :

(1) the Porter's reference to the "equivocator" (II. 3. 8—11) ;

*Evidence in favour of 1606.*

(2) his reference to the "farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty."

That the passage about the "equivocator<sup>1</sup>" refers to the trial of the Jesuit Garnet in March 1606 is a view which may be said to have established itself. A reference of this kind (like that to James's accession) is only effective if the events referred to are fresh in men's minds. The passage would scarcely have been inserted had the trial not been of comparatively recent occurrence.

The passage about the "farmer<sup>2</sup>" connects itself naturally with the abundant harvest of 1606.

Moreover, three minor indications make the period 1605—1606 probable, viz. :

(1) the incident, to which we shall return, at James's visit to Oxford in 1605 ;

*Other evidence pointing to 1605—1606.*

(2) the insertion of the *Historie of Macbeth* in the new edition published in 1606 of Warner's rhymed chronicle *Albion's England* ;

(3) "the investiture<sup>3</sup> of Sir James Murray on April 7, 1605, with the dignities of Scone forfeited by the Earl of Gowry for conspiracy against James."

<sup>1</sup> See p. 256. We may remember the probable allusion to the Gunpowder Plot in *King Lear*, I. 2. 122—124, written perhaps just before *Macbeth*.

<sup>2</sup> See the note on II. 3. 4, 5 (p. 139).

<sup>3</sup> F. S. Boas. Compare also Fleay's *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 239: "The applicability of the play to the Gowry conspiracy would be especially pleasing to James." The historical parallel was first remarked by Hunter, *New Illustrations*, II. pp. 153, 154.

The first of these incidents may have suggested the subject of the whole play to Shakespeare, and the third the particular point of the bestowal of Cawdor's honours on Macbeth; while the addition made to *Albion's England* may have been due to the popularity of Shakespeare's tragedy.

## II.

## THEORY OF A LATER DATE.

Some have argued in favour of a much later date of composition. *Macbeth*, they say, was "a new play" when Dr Forman saw it: otherwise he would not have summarised its plot so elaborately. But the inference seems forced. A modern play-goer accustomed to make notes on the pieces he saw might surely mention and describe the revival in 1901 of some notable play which he had missed seeing on its first production in 1897. Dr Forman does not hint that *Macbeth* was a new piece. He simply says that he saw it, and describes what he saw. We cannot assume more than that it was new to him; nor need we be surprised that he had not seen it earlier (if he had not), when we remember the enormous number of fresh plays with which the Elizabethan stage was enriched.

Equally weak, to my mind, is the argument in favour of a late date based on the following allusion in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1611), v. 1:

"When thou art at thy table with thy friends,  
 Merry in heart and fill'd with swelling wine,  
 I'll come in midst of all thy pride and mirth,  
 Invisible to all men but thyself,  
 And whisper such a sad tale in thine ear,  
 Shall make thee let the cup fall from thy hand,  
 And stand as mute and pale as death itself."

The allusion to Banquo's ghost is patent, but it does not



prove that in 1611 *Macbeth* was a new play: on the contrary, an equally fair inference, surely, is that it was *not* a new piece, which many of the audience might never have seen, but an old piece which had become so well known that an allusion to it would be recognised at once. And there is good reason, as we have observed, for thinking that Middleton had anticipated Beaumont and Fletcher in making the same allusion as far back as 1607.

Neither Forman's account, therefore, nor the passage just quoted, warrants our placing the composition of *Macbeth* so late as 1610, against all the evidence that makes for the earlier period 1605—1606. And apart from that evidence the date 1610 is absolutely impossible from metrical considerations. To assign it to 1610 is to place it on the very threshold of the period of the "Romances" (the *Tempest* itself was probably written not later than 1610), after works which reveal in a much fuller degree than *Macbeth* the characteristics of Shakespeare's maturest blank verse. Thus *Macbeth* has only 2 "weak endings<sup>1</sup>," whereas *Antony and Cleopatra* has 28, *Coriolanus* 44, and *The Tempest* (a very short piece) 25. Again, of "light endings" *Macbeth* has 21, *Antony and Cleopatra* 71, *Coriolanus* 60, *The Tempest* 42. *Macbeth* has 339 "feminine endings," *The Tempest* 476. Again, apart from the scenes in which the supernatural element dominates, there is a considerable amount of rhyme in *Macbeth*, and its presence cannot be accounted for wholly by the extremely disputable theory of "interpolations." Briefly, then, we may say that the metrical characteristics are conclusive against the date 1610. Nor is the style of *Macbeth*, though elliptical and involved, quite that of Shakespeare's last period. In fact the theory of so late a date of composition as 1610 is untenable.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 268, 269 (foot-note). The figures are Professor Ingram's. Of course, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* are much longer than *Macbeth*; the former, indeed, is nearly double the length. Still, the metrical discrepancy, in the respects mentioned above, is great. It is most conspicuous when we compare *Macbeth* with *The Tempest*, which just exceeds it in the number of lines.

There is now practically a consensus of opinion that *Macbeth* belongs to the period 1605—1606. Personally *Conclusion as to date of composition.* I am of those who, in view of the probable references in the Porter's speech, assign its composition to 1606, and its production to the latter part of that year. But that it was first "performed on the occasion of the festivities in celebration of King Christian IV. of Denmark's visit to the English court in 1606 is a mere (and needless) conjecture" (Ward).

## III.

## THE SOURCE OF THE PLAY.

The source whence Shakespeare derived the story of *Macbeth* is Holinshed's *Chronicles*<sup>1</sup> of *Englande, Holinshed. Scotland, and Ireland*—the source of his English historical plays and of *King Lear*. How he used this source of information—sometimes, but not often, reproducing the words of the Chronicle,—may be inferred, to some extent, from the "Extracts" that are given in another part of this volume (pp. 227—242).

The genesis of the Macbeth-story as given by Holinshed is interesting. The earliest extant versions are those contained in the *Chronicles* of John Fordun (who died about 1384) and his contemporary, Andrew Wynton (1350—1420), a Canon of St Andrew's. Fordun compiled *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, a work continued in his *Gesta Annalia*. Wynton wrote in the Scottish vernacular, not in Latin, "a metrical chronicle of the history of Scotland, which he called 'The Oryginale,' because it commenced with the beginning of the world<sup>2</sup>." These *Chronicles* were the starting-point of Scottish History. Unpublished, but

<sup>1</sup> A reference in *Richard II.* II. 4. 8 shows that Shakespeare used the second (1586—87) edition of Holinshed (to which many new passages were added). The omen of the withering of the bay-trees is not mentioned in the first edition (1577).

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of Biography.*

known through MSS., they were copied and expanded by Boece<sup>1</sup> in his *Historia Scotorum*, 1527, who refers specially to Fordun as one of his authorities. Of Boece's *Historia* a translation into the vernacular was made by Bellenden, at the request of James IV. of Scotland, and published in 1536. And Bellenden's work became in turn the source of Holinshed's Chronicle of Scotland, which, as Holinshed says, was "translated out of the Scottish" for him by a William Harrison. So the stages are Fordun's *Chronica* (containing in bk IV. the history of Macbeth) and Wynton's *Oryginale*, Boece's *Historia*, Bellenden's version of the *Historia*, Holinshed's version of Bellenden. The picture of Macbeth in these successive narratives is consistent, as we should expect. It is an extremely unfavourable picture, untrue to history as recorded by more reliable authorities, for the reason that will be found on p. 247 (last lines) and p. 248 of this volume.

There is a recent (and to my mind most fantastic) theory that Shakespeare consulted another Chronicle besides Holinshed's. It appears that a metrical rendering or adaptation of Bellenden's *History* was made by a certain "Master William Stewart," at the command of Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scotland, for her son James V. This metrical version of Bellenden differs often from the original (i.e. Bellenden) and consequently from Holinshed, who followed Bellenden; and an attempt has been made to show that there are in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* details which are also in Stewart's Chronicle but not in Holinshed. Stewart's Chronicle was unpublished: but (we are told) James VI. (James I. of England) "most certainly would have a copy" in MS., and quite possibly "lent it to the poet of his royal company of players to compare with Holinshed."

The theory is pure conjecture. There is not a shred of evidence in favour of this supposition of a royal loan, except (a) the fact that Shakespeare's company did receive consider-

<sup>1</sup> Hector Boece or Boethius (1465—1536), a Scotsman who studied at Paris, where his *Historia* was published, and afterwards founded King's College in Aberdeen University.

able marks of grace from James<sup>1</sup>, and (b) the resemblance between *Macbeth* and Stewart's Chronicle in certain details. But the details adduced are of the most trivial character. To press resemblances so slender is to deny Shakespeare the very elements of originality and misrepresent him as the mere slave of "sources." Even if Stewart's Chronicle had been published and were easily accessible to Shakespeare, there would not, in my opinion, be valid reason for assuming that he used it. Nor can I see the smallest probability in the suggestion that he consulted Bellenden, whose narrative was available in Holinshed's Chronicles, and for English readers required to be "translated out of the Scottish."

## IV.

## THE MACBETH-STORY IN ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE.

Holinshed's Chronicle, then, is the one ascertained source of Shakespeare's tragedy. But apparently Shakespeare was not the first Elizabethan writer to handle the story of Macbeth. Possibly it had been dramatised already. For a "Ballad of Macdobeth" was entered on the Register of the Stationers' Company August 27,

*Was there an older play of "Macbeth"?*

<sup>1</sup> Soon after his accession he appointed them the "King's Company" (the title they bore thenceforth instead of their old name the "Lord Chamberlain's Company"), and granted them permission to perform not only at the Globe Theatre but "in the town-hall or moot-hall of any country-town"—a high privilege. Further, by James's command, Shakespeare and eight other actors of the company walked in the coronation-procession from the Tower of London to Westminster, March 15, 1604, in scarlet cloaks which the royal generosity had provided. And there were repeated court performances of Shakespeare's plays by this Company. (Lee, *Life of Shakespeare*, pp. 230—234.) It may be noted that from 1610 (the last year of Shakespeare's life as an actor) the King's Company acted at the Blackfriars Theatre as well as at the Globe.

1596; and the same entry records "the ballad entituled The Taming of a shrew." "If," says Collier, "*The Taming of a Shrew*, which we know to have been a play, were so recorded, it is not unlikely that the 'Ballad of Macdobeth' was of the same character."

Again, in the pamphlet *Kemp's Nine Days' Wonder* (1600) occur the words: "I met a proper vpright youth, onely for a little stooping in the shoulders, all hart to the heele, a penny Poet, whose first making was the miserable stolne story of Macdoel, or Macdobeth, or Macsomewhat, for I am sure a Mac it was, though I never had the maw<sup>1</sup> to see it."

Here the reference certainly appears to be to the "Ballad of Macdobeth," while the words "to see it" imply "that the piece had been publicly represented, and that it was not merely a printed 'ballad.' Kemp, as a highly popular actor, would most naturally refer to dramatic performances<sup>2</sup>."

There is ground, therefore, for supposing that the Macbeth-story had been handled in some literary form or other, whether a genuine ballad or a rough play like the old *King Leir and his Three Daughters* which preceded and partly inspired *King Lear*. The possibilities, indeed, of the story were obvious. Aptly had the Scots writer Buchanan in his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1528) described the mysterious episodes of Macbeth's career as "*theatris...aptiora quam historia.*"

Again, it is interesting to note that the attention of other unknown dramatists had been turned to the rich stores of Scottish history and legend. Thus<sup>3</sup> between July 1567 and March 1568 the Master of the Revels spent money on scenery for a "Tragedie of the King of Scottes." A play called "Malcolm King of Scottes" is mentioned in the diary of the theatrical manager Henslowe under the date April 27, 1602. The Gowry conspiracy, which presents an analogy to Cawdor's, is known to have been dramatised as early as December, 1604.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. stomach, appetite.

<sup>2</sup> Collier. See Furness, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> See *Athenæum*, July 25, 1896 ("Shakespeare's materials for *Macbeth*").

*Plays founded  
on Scottish  
history.*

Nor must we forget the incident, already glanced at, which associates King James's visit to Oxford in 1605 with the literary history of Shakespeare's play. On the King's arrival at the gate of St John's College a short scene or interlude was enacted. "Three young youths" (says a contemporary account), "in habit and attire like *Nymphes*, confronted him," and apostrophised the illustrious visitors in a florid Latin oration<sup>1</sup>, on behalf of England, Scotland and Ireland, comparing themselves with the Weird Sisters who had predicted to Banquo the regal honours of his line, and invoking a yet richer fulfilment of the prediction. This incident ("the concept whereof the King did very much applaude," as well he might, for the exceeding felicity of its flattering allusion to the Stuarts' tradition of their ancestry) may have come to Shakespeare's knowledge and been the germ of *Macbeth*. On the other hand, it is not probable that this subject for the interlude would have been chosen, had Shakespeare already handled it.

## V.

## SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF HOLINSHED.

Let us now revert to the subject of *Macbeth's* relation to Holinshed's Chronicle. We have seen that Holinshed's narrative supplied the rude materials of the tragedy. "Nothing" (it has been said) "was wanting for the dramatic treatment of the

*How did  
Shakespeare use  
Holinshed's story  
of Macbeth?*

<sup>1</sup> The verses are extant. They commence with the allusion to Banquo:

Fatidicas olim fama est cecinisse sorores  
Imperium sine fine tuæ, rex inclyte, stirpis.  
Banquonem agnovit generosa Loquabria Thanum;  
Nec tibi, Banquo, tuis sed sceptrâ nepotibus illæ  
Immortalibus immortalia vaticinâtæ:  
In saltum, ut lateas, dum Banquo recedis ab aula.  
Tres eadem pariter canimus tibi fata tuisque,  
Dum spectande tuis, e saltu accedis ad urbem;  
Teque salutamus.

subject except its psychological development." How did Shakespeare use these materials? The salient feature in his handling of them is the freedom he allowed himself. His deviations from history in his English and Roman historical plays are mainly changes of time and place, and do not often involve misrepresentation of fact<sup>1</sup> or character. But this criticism does not apply to *Macbeth*. "It is clear [rather] that Shakespeare, though he may have thought the story as historical as that of the Richards or Henries, no longer approached it as history." He approached it simply as the stuff out of which high tragedy might be wrought. Possibly the almost mythical remoteness of the dim, barbarous era to which the action belonged seemed to him to warrant whatever divergence from so-called history served his dramatic purpose. At any rate the divergences from his authority are very considerable. Those which affect the characterisation of the *dramatis personæ* may be summed up thus:

He whitens the character of Duncan, and blackens the character of Macbeth in a corresponding degree, for obvious purposes of contrast: he whitens the character of Banquo, for the same purpose, but also from a personal and complimentary motive; and he makes Lady Macbeth less odious because at least unselfish.

*Deviations  
from Holinshed  
in the charac-  
terisation.*

Holinshed's Duncan is a young and incapable king, too "soft and gentle of nature," and altogether dependent on Macbeth and Banquo; "a faint-hearted milkesop" (said his enemies), "more meet to governe a sort [=set] of idle moonks in some cloister, than to haue the rule of such valiant and hardie men of warre as the Scots were." His reign, we are told by historians, was as unfortunate as it was brief. Shakespeare's Duncan, a man of

*Duncan.*

<sup>1</sup> A couple of minor deviations from Holinshed in historical or semi-historical matters may be dismissed at once with a bare reference to the Notes in which they are commented on; namely, the Note on I. 2. 61—63, and that on v. 8. 73. Each shows that alike at the outset and the close of the tragedy Shakespeare condensed two campaigns into one.

years (we are made to feel), is "every inch a king," a regal, illustrious figure; gracious, indeed, and "gentle," yet strong withal and capable; one whose merits extort from his slayer's own mouth the admission:

"this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against  
—The deep damnation of his taking-off<sup>1</sup>;"

a ruler whose fate will waken universal grief throughout his realm.

The evident purpose of this departure from Holinshed's account is to deepen the pity of Duncan's end and the heinousness of a crime which lacks even the poor palliation of its victim's incompetence. "Vaulting ambition" is shown to be the usurper's sole motive, as himself recognises.

Holinshed's<sup>2</sup> Macbeth is a just, a noble ruler, at least in the earlier and longer period of his usurpation. The *Macbeth* of the play proves himself from the outset of his reign a fear-stricken despot, with whom the instinct of self-preservation soon becomes a ruling passion for bloodshed.

In fact, all the good in Holinshed's picture of Macbeth as ruler is ignored and the evil intensified to the utmost. Yet Holinshed's picture itself did but scant justice to Macbeth, whom the more authentic of Scottish chronicles "paint as the greatest king that early Scotland had, respected by his enemies, honoured in the ancient Church, beloved of the Scottish people."

Again, the Banquo of Holinshed's story is privy to the murder of Duncan. But the dramatic balance required that he should be made a foil to Macbeth in the face of similar "soliciting" by the powers of evil; nor could the traditional ancestor of the House of Stuart be held up to infamy in a play that was designed to pay special

<sup>1</sup> See I. 7. 12—28 (a speech of the utmost significance).

<sup>2</sup> See **Extracts 11, 12**, on pp. 233—235 of this volume.



compliment to the first Stuart occupant of the English throne. So we get the Banquo of *Macbeth*.

On the other hand, Lady Macbeth is bettered. In the Chronicle she is fiercely self-seeking. “The words of the three weird sisters greatlie encouraged him herevnto [i.e. the murder], but speciallie his wife lay sore vpon him to attempt the thing, as she that was verie ambitious, burning in vnquenchable desire to beare the name of a queene.” Shakespeare has absolved his Lady Macbeth from this passion. She “unsexes” herself and renounces the influences of her better “nature,” but she does it for Macbeth’s sake alone; she exemplifies all the evils of uncontrolled ambition, but the ambition is not for self: rather, it costs her the most supreme sacrifice of self.

In all these points of characterisation, then, Shakespeare has broken boldly from his guide. But still bolder is the way he has grafted on to the Macbeth-story the circumstances<sup>1</sup> of an older tragedy in Scottish history.

## VI.

## THE DONWALD-STORY.

“Macbeth’s career” (says Dr Herford<sup>2</sup>), “and to some extent his character, are modelled on those of another Scottish assassin, Donwald, whose treacherous murder of King Duff Holinshed had described in vivid detail some twenty pages before, while of Duncan’s murder he recorded merely the bare fact. Donwald, an officer of the king, enjoying his absolute trust, entertained him in the castle of Fores, of which he had charge. His wife incited him to use his opportunity, ‘and shewed him the means whereby he might soonest accomplish it.’ Donwald himself

*Analysis of the  
Donwald-story  
in its relation to  
“Macbeth.”*

<sup>1</sup> See **Extracts 4—9**, on pp. 229—233.

<sup>2</sup> I am much indebted to his brief but most masterly introduction to the play in the “Eversley” *Shakespeare*.

'abhorred the act greatly in heart,' but yields to his wife's urgency. Duff on retiring sends a present to his host; the grooms in the king's chamber, plied with meat and drink by his wife's care, sleep heavily, and fall victims, next morning, to Donwald's 'pious rage.' Fearful portents ensue: the sun is darkened; birds and beasts run counter to their common instincts. All these details Shakespeare has transferred to the story of Duncan, and they add greatly to its tragic force. Holinshed's Macbeth is only his victim's 'kinsman and his subject'; Shakespeare's violates a yet stronger instinct as 'his host,' 'who should against his murderer shut the door, not bear the knife himself.' Holinshed's Macbeth plans and executes the murder with matter-of-fact promptitude, without a trace of hesitation or compunction; Shakespeare's Macbeth, like Donwald, has accesses of deep reluctance, in which his wife's resolute energy turns the scale. Holinshed's Lady Macbeth urges her husband 'to attempt the thing,' but has no part in its execution. Thus the elements of the relation between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and of the hesitations and 'infirmity' which chiefly make him a tragic figure at all, are suggested by Holinshed's Donwald, not by his Macbeth. Much even of the political background of the murder belongs rather to the story of Duff. Holinshed's Macbeth acts with the complicity of 'his trusty friends,'—Banquo among the rest,—and 'upon confidence of their promised aid.' Shakespeare's Macbeth, like Donwald, has no political confederates, can count upon no sympathy if his part in the 'deep damnation' of the king's 'taking off' is discovered, and precipitates discovery by over-acting his feigned grief<sup>1</sup>. Even Donwald has the aid of trusty servants: Shakespeare sends husband and wife unaided to their work amid the cry of owls and the prayers of startled sleepers." And the very fact that in respect of the actual

<sup>1</sup> "Stone's *Holinshed*, p. 26 f. It is interesting to note that Milton included both 'Macbeth' and 'Duff and Donwald' in his list of subjects for a tragedy. It is clear that he would have kept the two stories wholly distinct."

execution of the ruthless deed Shakespeare reverts from the Donwald-story to the Macbeth-story and makes Macbeth slay the king with his own hand is another illustration of the dramatist's conscious and consistent purpose of not sparing him our utmost execration.

One other point in the relation *Macbeth* bears to Holinshed—a point connected with the Macbeth-story, not the Donwald-story—remains to be noticed. “Holinshed's version” (says the same critic) “employs a formidable apparatus of enchantment. Macbeth receives three warnings, on three occasions, from three distinct classes of prophetically gifted beings.” These are (1) the three “weird sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, or else some nymphs or feiries, indued with knowledge of prophesie by their necromantically science<sup>1</sup>,” who met Macbeth on the fatal heath; (2) “certeine wizzards, in whose words he put great confidence (for that the prophesie had happened so right, which the three faries or weird sisters had declared vnto him),” who warned him to take heed of Macduff<sup>2</sup>; and (3) “a certeine witch, whome hee had in great trust<sup>3</sup>,” who duped him by her “sweet bodements.” These mysterious and malefic beings are blended into the “weird-sister witches,” for the evident sake of concentration of dramatic effect.

## VII.

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “SOURCES”?

Now, while it is proper always to recognise Shakespeare's obligations where they exist, we must be very careful not to over-estimate them. The word “source” or “original” will mislead us unless we ask ourselves what constitutes the greatness

*Danger of  
over-estimating  
Shakespeare's  
obligations.*

<sup>1</sup> See **Extract 2**, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> See **Extract 15**, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> See **Extract 16**, p. 236.

of his plays, and consider how little that greatness is due to any nominal sources: how such qualities as characterisation (ever the crown of the dramatist's art), humour and wit, poetry and pathos and tragic intensity, deft manipulation of plot and underplot and varied relief, are Shakespeare's own gift, never the inspiration of another. This is in truth a vital point, and on it Dr Furness has some valuable remarks, written indeed with reference to the tragedies, more particularly *King Lear*, but applicable (*mutatis mutandis*) to all Shakespeare's plays of which some "original" has been unearthed.

"What false impressions are conveyed in the phrases which we have to use to express the process whereby Shakespeare converted the stocks and stones of the old dramas and chronicles into living, breathing men and women! We say 'he drew his original' from this source, or he 'found his materials' in that source. But how much did he 'draw,' or what did he 'find'? Granting that he drew from Holinshed, or whence you please, where did he find Lear's madness, or the pudder of the elements, or the inspired babblings of the Fool? Of whatsoever makes his tragedies sublime and heaven-high above all other human compositions,—of that we find never a trace....When, after reading one of his tragedies, we turn to what we are pleased to call the 'original of his plot,' I am reminded of those glittering gems, of which Heine speaks, that we see at night in lovely gardens, and think must have been left there by kings' children at play, but when we look for these jewels by day we see only wretched little worms which crawl painfully away, and which the foot forbears to crush only out of strange pity."

In this connection it may be noted that the two scenes of *Macbeth* which seem to exhaust the last possibilities of terror and pity—the banquet-scene (III. 4) and the sleep-walking scene—have no counterpart in Shakespeare's "source"; nor has the little less wonderful dagger-scene (II. 1).

## VIII.

## TIME OF THE PLAY'S ACTION.

The events of *Macbeth* are supposed to happen on nine days, separated by intervals; the arrangement being as follows:

*Day 1.* Act I. Sc. 1 to 3.

*Day 2.* Act I. Sc. 4 to 7.

*Day 3.* Act II. Sc. 1 to 4. *An interval*, say a couple of weeks.

*Day 4.* Act III. Sc. 1 to 5. [Act III. Sc. 6, an impossible time.]

*Day 5.* Act IV. Sc. 1.

*Day 6.* Act IV. Sc. 2. *An interval.* Ross's journey to England.

*Day 7.* Act IV. Sc. 3, Act V. Sc. 1. *An interval.* Malcolm's return to Scotland.

*Day 8.* Act V. Sc. 2 and 3.

*Day 9.* Act V. Sc. 4 to 8.

The historic period of the play is seventeen years—from 1040, the year of Duncan's death, to 1057, the year of Macbeth's. The dramatic time is less than *Historic time.* a seventeenth part of the historic. One critic computes it at not more than two months, including intervals. This seems to me rather too short an estimate: could the political results of Macbeth's action as indicated in Acts IV. and V. have ripened so rapidly? Perhaps 'a few months' represents as close a conclusion as the evidence enables us to arrive at.

## IX.

## SHAKESPEARE AND SCOTLAND.

The Celtic atmosphere of *Macbeth* is well described in the following passage<sup>1</sup>:

"Thus, in *Macbeth* as in *Hamlet*, Shakspeare sought his materials in the records of a semi-historic past. But, instead of Scandinavian saga, he now quarried in the richer mine of Celtic

<sup>1</sup> F. S. Boas, *Shakspeare and his Predecessors*, pp. 412, 413.

legend....During the fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries the poets north of the Tweed, from King James to Sir David Lyndesay, while showing a sturdy patriotism in the spirit of their verse, had borrowed its forms almost exclusively from Chaucer. Hitherto England had received no equivalent<sup>1</sup>, but the balance was more than redressed when (the annals of 'Caledonia, stern and wild' furnished Shakspeare with the materials of one of his mightiest creations.) He may have visited Scotland as a member of the company of which Laurence Fletcher, one of the Lord Chamberlain's Servants, was the head, and whose presence at Aberdeen is recorded in the register of the Town Council for October, 1601. But, however this may

be, he pierced, with an intuition that in an Elizabethan Englishman was wellnigh miraculous, into the very heart of Highland romance. The desolate storm-swept heaths, where the evil powers of earth and sky may fittingly meet and greet in hideous carnival; the lonely castles, where passions of primæval intensity find their natural home, and where, at dead of night, murder may stealthily move to its design; the eerie atmosphere, where the hoarse croak of the raven and the scream of the owl, the fatal bellman, foretell the impending doom, and where the wraith of the victim stalks to the head of the board in the assassin's banqueting-hall—every detail is steeped in the peculiar genius of Celtic Scotland. Hitherto this fertile poetic material had found its chief expression in ballads of weird imaginative power, but these, though of supreme excellence in their kind, were only *Volkslieder*, and had no more than a local circulation. But now Shakspeare claimed for universal purposes what had hitherto been the monopoly of the clans. His mighty art preserved all the mysticism and elemental passion of the Highland story, while investing it with a stupendous moral significance of which its Celtic originators had never dreamed. So Titanic is the theme as handled by the dramatist that, contrary to his usual practice,

<sup>1</sup> We have seen, however, that the English drama had begun to owe something to the inspiration of Scottish history and its romance.

he does not complicate it with episodes, but develops it in its isolated grandeur. Thus *Macbeth* is of all the great tragedies the simplest in structure."

The question of Shakespeare's travels is one of the many fascinating problems of his little-known life. Was he one of "The English Comedians" who travelled and performed in Germany, and did he thus become acquainted with Ayrer's play *Die Schöne Sidea*, which preceded and in no small degree resembles *The Tempest*<sup>1</sup>? Did he acquire on Italian soil that knowledge of Italian life and local colour, and national characteristics, with which plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*<sup>2</sup> and *Othello* are penetrated through and through? Each hypothesis has found advocates; and there are touches of description in the two Venetian plays which at least lend plausibility to the suggestion that he painted from the life, from personal observation. Yet the balance of probability is against his ever having been out of England, nor need we assume any other resources than his all-embracing sympathy and an imagination which enabled him to realise and harmonise into a vivid whole the miscellaneous information that might be derived from books and association with travellers.

As to the question naturally suggested by *Macbeth*, whether he ever set foot in Scotland, the most reliable of his biographers<sup>3</sup> writes:

"It has been repeatedly urged that Shakespeare's company visited Scotland, and that he went with it. In November 1599 English actors arrived in Scotland under the leadership of Lawrence Fletcher and one Martin, and were welcomed with enthusiasm by the king. Fletcher was a colleague of Shakespeare in 1603, but is not known to have been one earlier. Shakespeare's company never included an actor named Martin. Fletcher repeated the visit in October 1601. There is nothing to indicate that any of his companions belonged to Shakespeare's

<sup>1</sup> See Pitt Press ed., pp. xvii, xviii.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix to *The Merchant of Venice*, pp. 187—190.

<sup>3</sup> Lee, *Life of Shakespeare*, pp. 40—42.

company. In like manner, Shakespeare's accurate reference in 'Macbeth' [I. 6. 1—6] to the 'nimble' but 'sweet' climate of Inverness, and the vivid impression he conveys of the aspects of wild Highland heaths, have been judged to be the certain fruits of a personal experience; but the passages in question, into which a more definite significance has possibly been read than Shakespeare intended, can be satisfactorily accounted for by his inevitable intercourse with Scotsmen in London and the theatres after James I.'s accession." With this conclusion we may rest satisfied.

## X.

MACBETH AND LADY MACBETH<sup>1</sup>.

*Macbeth* has been termed the Tragedy of Ambition. All that a great work of art means and teaches can seldom, if ever, be crystallised in a phrase; nor is *Macbeth* an exception to the principle, though it is the least complex of Shakespeare's tragedies and is, indeed, marked by a sheer simplicity of theme, motive and treatment which consorts with the simple, unsophisticated period of the events. Still, "Tragedy of Ambition" seems a true and adequate description of the play, to this extent at least, that ambition is the main-spring of the action. Ambition alone calls into operation the forces that bring about the central deed and its train of fearful results. In Macbeth himself it is selfish ambition, the unqualified passion to possess what is not his, the conscious self-seeking that confesses itself to itself and dispenses with the hypocrisy of self-exculpation. In Lady Macbeth it is selfless ambition, a more potent, a deadlier, incentive because born of love and misguided self-sacrifice. And in each the working of

<sup>1</sup> Many points in this section have been suggested by various essays on the play.



this passion, however different its origin, is the same, viz. the ruin of a nature not incapable of better things. For neither is "fiend-like": else they were not tragic figures at all; their fall would touch us with no sense of the "pity of it," their fate in all its terror of long-drawn torture and inglorious death would stir no sympathy.

The good side of Macbeth's character is brought into the greater prominence. The second scene represents him as the typical heroic warrior, "Bellona's bridegroom." In Duncan's eyes he is "a peerless kinsman." There must be great capacities of goodness in the man of whom these descriptions are spoken by those who should know him well. But these possibilities are annulled by inordinate ambition and signal weakness of will. With his ambition is joined an equally excessive imagination. On the positive side these two qualities, ambition and imagination, are the leading traits of his character. The one dominates in the earlier, the other in the latter part of the play; for the one instigates the crime which crowns his desires and leaves no further scope for ambition, and the other is the chief instrument by which Nemesis avenges the crime. On the negative side his character presents a weakness of moral courage in inverse proportion to his physical bravery, and a conscience that serves but to hamper his schemes by feeble, intermittent scruples, and to rob success of such satisfaction as the calculating, remorseless villainy of a Richard III. enjoys.

The irony of life places Macbeth amid circumstances which seem designed to further the triumph of evil. He has meditated the crime before his first meeting with the Witches; and at that meeting he is already flushed with the pride of great achievement. Thus from his previous dreams of kingship and from his present consciousness of merit he is in a mental and moral condition specially susceptible to temptation. The temptation comes in the manner that would most appeal to him. Extreme imaginativeness makes him the easy prey of "supernatural soliciting." The effect of his first contact with this mysterious, external influence which harmonises so strangely with his inmost thoughts is profound. We see him

“rapt” into one of those moods of abstraction and reverie in which, more than once in the play, he loses touch with the realities of the moment. Yet the influence of imagination soon works in the opposite direction to superstition. It paints with appalling vividness the consequences of his contemplated deed. Thus his whole “state of man” is shaken with the conflict of emotions and he would fain temporise in paralysed suspense. Events, however, are against him. Duncan’s nomination of Malcolm compels a decision of some kind, and Duncan’s coming furnishes the great opportunity.

The struggle in Macbeth’s soul starts anew, and now his wife intervenes, with her terrible resources of evil influence. Still, imagination once more admonishes and holds him back, and conscience and prudence unite their voices in the warning. The victory over ambition and even his wife’s influence seems gained: he will “proceed no further” in the “business,” and halts on the brink. But Lady Macbeth is not to be diverted from the purpose which, suggested originally by him, has fascinated her. And now their very love becomes a curse to him: what should have been to his advantage is turned into an occasion of falling. For knowing his character, on its weak side at any rate, and knowing her power over him, she scruples not to use her knowledge and power to the full, playing on every motive of temptation and incitement which a swift brain and remorseless determination can suggest. Against such urgency, stronger than the “supernatural solliciting” itself, he cannot hold out. The iron will masters the irresolute will, sweeps aside scruples and fears, and bears him forward on its resistless current. The crime which originated in the promptings of ambition is consummated, and ambition as a dramatic motive of the tragedy is exhausted. Thenceforth imagination is the ruling motive. From the moment of Duncan’s murder to Macbeth’s latest breath imagination gives him no rest. At first, indeed, when the crisis calls for instant action, the instinct of absolute self-preservation asserts its sway. Macbeth shows much of his soldierly capacity for action, and plays his part well, save for the momentary impulse which makes him slay

the grooms and thus rouse needless suspicion. But when the immediate peril is over and the time for reflection has come, then we see him self-tortured into a frenzy of unrest and wanton crime.

The turning-point of the plot may appear to be Banquo's murder, in that it precipitates Macbeth's downfall. Till that point events have played into his hands; he has won the crown, and the flight of Malcolm and Donalbain has left him in undisturbed possession. But now all goes against him. The similarity of the second murder converts to certainty men's suspicions as to the cause of the first, at the banquet-scene he betrays himself irredeemably, and his thanes are driven to flight or measures of self-defence. Thus the murder of Banquo marks the decline of Macbeth's fortunes, it is the beginning of the end. But the end was inevitable, whatever the steps towards it. Everything that follows the murder of Duncan is the direct outcome of it. If Duncan lived so would Banquo. The first crime changed the whole course of Macbeth's career. It is the real dividing line, the essential turning-point, the parting in life's way. And the fact is expressed in his own words (II. 3. 73—78).

“The Rubicon of crime” once crossed, the character-interest changes. Hitherto, as regards Macbeth, it has lain in study of the struggle within his soul. We have watched the unequal conflict between the good and the evil in him, the one supported by his scruples and fears, the other by his ambitious longings, by the intervention of “fate and metaphysical aid,” and by his wife's incentives. Now the contest gives place to a hideous consistency and singleness of purpose. “Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill” is his watchword and practice. For imagination, which once almost availed to withhold him from the deed, now works through his conscience and still more through fear, and goads him on to effect the removal of any in whom it sees a possible avenger of Duncan and claimant to the throne. The vessel of Macbeth's peace is poisoned and the poison corrodes his whole being. Not an instant's enjoyment has the successful accomplishment of villainy brought to him or her. Existence becomes a restless ecstasy of haunting

fancies and alarms. He who could with difficulty bend himself up to the first terrible deed, and only did the second (II. 3. 89—101) in a fit of fury and panic, now becomes the deliberate contriver of murder, and soon passes to the third stage of blood-thirsty abandonment. Banquo, the more favoured of the Weird Sisters, is his chief dread and falls his speedy victim; but blood-steeped hallucination wreaks the ineffable avengement of that vision at the feast. Driven into deeper desperation, Macbeth must know the worst, by whatsoever means, and seeks inspiration of the Witches. Their prophecies instil a "security" that does but increase his reckless defiance of heaven and humanity. Logically his credulity should restrain him from the crimes that wring daily cries of agony from his bleeding land; they are wanton, causeless savagery in one who rests his trust on riddles that seem impossible of fulfilment against him. But Macbeth has passed far beyond the appeal of reason. Bloodshed has become a mania ("some say he's mad"), restless action the very condition of his being.

At length all the normal relations and interests of life have no reality in his eyes. An intolerable gloom settles down on him. He learns his wife's death with absolute callousness, it merely evokes an outburst of weariness and contempt for existence itself. One thing alone he holds fast with blind desperation, his belief in the Witches' supposed assurances of his safety. But at last the truth which Banquo divined from the first is forced upon Macbeth and he sees these juggling fiends in their true light. Naught now remains to him but the animal instinct that clings to life:

"They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
But, bear-like, I must fight the course."

And this world-sated desperado had been "the brave Macbeth," "Bellona's bridegroom," "the peerless kinsman"!

Lady Macbeth, the Clytemnestra<sup>1</sup> of English tragedy, is naturally drawn as a foil to Macbeth. She possesses "a frightfully determined will," an iron

*Lady Macbeth.*

<sup>1</sup> "Among all the creations of Shakespearian and Greek drama,

stability of resolve. It is to her what imagination is to Macbeth, the feature that transcends and dominates all others in the character. It is the secret of her influence over him and of her success in winning him to consent. It enables her to carry her share in the plot through, to remedy his errors, and come to his rescue in the great crises of the action. But it proves her ruin. It makes her impose upon herself and bear, for a time, a strain beyond the ultimate endurance of the rest of her powers. In fact, her imperious will, like his excess of the imaginative faculty, disturbs the proper relation of the forces of character. An abnormal element that knows no restraint of conscience or common prudence, that recks nothing of foresight or fear, it is the source of abnormal effort, the reaction from which wrecks the whole fabric. She has extreme self-reliance, unlike Macbeth, who turns instinctively to her for cooperation, until his sense of menacing retribution substitutes its fatal stimulus. Intellectually, too, she is Macbeth's superior, as Portia is the intellectual superior of Bassanio, and Rosalind of Orlando. With what dexterity she meets Macbeth's reluctance to go further in the work and assails his weak points: how swiftly she perceives—too late—the effect of the deed on Macbeth: what resource and alertness of brain she manifests at the banquet-scene, where she tries first one method, and then another, and yet another of restoring his mental balance. But intellectual keenness does not compensate for the lack of imagination, and in the latter quality she is, surely, deficient. Gifted with true imaginative insight she could never have made her appalling miscalculation as to the moral results which their crime would produce in Macbeth, and in herself. She thinks that though he may shrink from the deed through fears or scruples, yet he will not

Lady Macbeth and Æschylus' Clytemnestra, who 'in man's counsels bore no woman's heart' (*γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλὸν ἐλπίζον κέαρ*, *Agamemnon*, 11), most closely resemble each other. But a study of the points of resemblance attests no knowledge of Æschylus on Shakespeare's part, but merely the close community of genius that subsisted between the two poets"—*Lee*.

wish it undone: that he will be able to reap joy of his sin. She never hints the least foreshadowing of the revolution which it really works in both. And this limitation of view argues inadequacy of penetrative imagination. It is significant, too, that the great outbursts of imaginative eloquence which signalise the play even among Shakespeare's works all come from Macbeth. And there are moments (e.g. in II. 2. 40) when his hectic fancy seems to transport him beyond her comprehension.

Of conscience she certainly manifests less than Macbeth. It has been held, indeed, that even the dire sleep-walking scene does not justify us in crediting her with true remorse: "from her lips, as from her husband's, no word of contrition for the past ever falls." Still, we should judge people less by what they say than by what we see them to be; and seeing Lady Macbeth wrecked in body and soul, we feel, I think, that of such an overthrow some working of conscience must be a potent cause. No doubt there are other causes. The recoil from the revolting effort; the physical horror of the scenes of that fatal night; the memory, uncontrolled in sleep by the normal will-power, of those appalling sights; the bitterness of isolation from Macbeth (for the separating power of partnership in guilt is one of the play's great lessons); the sheer sense of failure and frustrated hopes; the slow poison of brooding regret for which she lacks the man's antidote of action: all these have joined to make her this wraith-like figure of despair. Yet deeper than all these, preying on her "nearest" of being, *must* be the *causa causans* of an outraged conscience.

The good in Lady Macbeth's character, what redeems her from unqualified detestation, is less on the surface than the good in Macbeth. But the better nature which her action belies is indicated by several traits. Thus she is wholly devoted to her husband. "Her whole ambition is for him and through him; of herself and of elevation for herself she never speaks. She lives only in him and in his greatness." The tenderness of his bearing witnesses her power of attraction and charm. She utters no word of reproach after his breakdown, but

shows herself still solicitous for his welfare (III. 4. 141). It is indeed one of the regal notes of their relations that nothing of vulgar recrimination ever passes between them. They know that each has ruined the other, he her by his original suggestion of the crime and she him by her relentless instigation of it against his better judgment: but they separate in silence and "with averted eyes" move towards their several dooms unapproachable. And as she is shown us a loyal, though misguided and misleading wife, so there are hints of maternal and filial tenderness in her nature (I. 7. 54—59, II. 2. 13, 14). Moreover, her invocation (rhetorical rather than imaginative) of the powers of darkness proves that she is no stranger to the gentler impulses of womanhood. A Goneril would not need to pray that she might be "unsexed," nor a Regan to petition for a richer measure of "direct cruelty." Neither of that hideous pair of Gorgons could apprehend or even comprehend the "compunctious visitings of nature." But Lady Macbeth knows that to execute her fell purpose she must be nerved by some unnatural access of ferocity<sup>1</sup>. And it seems as if her prayer were answered: the woman who can go into that chamber of death must be unsexed, for a space: but nature recurs, and while Macbeth is brutalised by crime, her finer spirit is broken by the reaction from moral self-violence.

Lady Macbeth and Hamlet stand apart from the rest of Shakespeare's creations in the intensity and perplexity of the interest they arouse. Of all the women Shakespeare has drawn, none exercise so strange a fascination (not even the "serpent of old Nile") as this fragile<sup>2</sup>, indomitable northern Queen, who makes the great denial—denial of her sex—and greatly suffers, even to the death.

<sup>1</sup> "To make assurance doubly sure," she has recourse, also, to artificial means of stimulating her hardihood (II. 2. 1).

<sup>2</sup> "This little hand" (V. 1. 50).

## XI.

## “OUR GREATEST POSSESSION”?

“I<sup>1</sup> regard *Macbeth*, upon the whole, as the greatest<sup>2</sup> treasure of our dramatic literature. We may look as Britons at Greek sculpture, and at Italian paintings, with a humble consciousness that our native art has never reached their perfection; but in the drama we can confront Æschylus himself with Shakespeare; and of all modern theatres, *ours* alone can compete with the Greek in the unborrowed nativeness and sublimity of its superstition. In the grandeur of tragedy *Macbeth* has no parallel, till we go back to the *Prometheus and the Furies* of the Attic stage. I could even produce, if it were not digressing too far from my subject, innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare’s and of Æschylus’s style,—a similarity, both in beauty and in the fault of excess, that unless the contrary had been proved, would lead me to suspect our great dramatist to have been a studious Greek scholar. But their resemblance arose from the consanguinity of nature. In one respect, the tragedy of *Macbeth* always reminds me of Æschylus’s poetry. It has scenes and conceptions absolutely too bold for representation. What stage could do justice to Æschylus, when the Titan Prometheus makes his appeal to the elements; and when the hammer is heard in the Scythian Desert that rivets his chains? Or when the Ghost of Clytemnestra rushes into Apollo’s temple, and rouses the sleeping Furies? I wish to imagine these scenes: I should be sorry to see the acting of them attempted. In like

<sup>1</sup> The poet Campbell (quoted in the “Temple” *Shakespeare*).

<sup>2</sup> I suppose that the judgment of modern criticism would be in favour of *Hamlet*, which expresses so much more of the introspection that characterises the modern spirit.



manner, there are parts of *Macbeth* which I delight to read much more than to see in the theatre....Nevertheless, I feel no inconsistency in reverting from these remarks to my first assertion, that all in all, *Macbeth* is our greatest possession in dramatic poetry."

The main impressions left by the play stand out clearly in Gervinus's summary :

"This tragedy has ever been regarded and criticised with distinguishing preference among Shakespeare's works; our own Schiller reproduced it, Schlegel spoke of it with enthusiasm, Drake called it 'the greatest effort of our author's genius, and the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld.' It has also obtained favour above the other plays of Shakespeare in lands peopled by other than the Teutonic race, either from its felt or perceived resemblance to ancient tragedy, or from its unity of design and the simple progress of its development, or from its distinct characterisation, in which the poet has employed less mystery than usual; most of all, indeed, from its pictorial charm and poetic colouring. If perhaps no other play of Shakespeare's can vie with *Hamlet* in philosophical insight into the nature and worth of the various powers at work in man, if none can compete with *Henry IV.* in fresh delight in a vast and active career, if none can compare with *Othello* in profoundness of design and careful carrying out of the characters, if none with *Lear* in the power of contending passions, and none with *Cymbeline* in the importance of moral principles, *Macbeth*, in like manner, stands forth uniquely pre-eminent in the splendour of poetic and picturesque diction and in the living representation of persons, times, and places. Schlegel perceived the vigorous heroic age of the North depicted in it with powerful touches, the generations of an iron time, whose virtue is bravery. How grandly do the mighty forms rise, how naturally do they move in an heroic style! What a different aspect is presented by this tyrant Macbeth by the side of the heroes Macduff, Banquo, and Siward, compared to that of the crook-back Richard amid a crooked generation! Locally, we are transported into the

Highlands of Scotland, where everything appears tinged with superstition, full of tangible intercommunion with the supernatural world and prognostics of the moral life by signs in the animate and inanimate kingdom; where, in conformity with this, men are credulous in belief and excitable in fancy; where they speak with strong expression, with highly poetical language, and with unusual imagery, such as strikes us even at the present day in popular orators of the Gaelic races.

“This mastery over the general representation of time and place is rivalled by the picture of single circumstances and situations. Reynolds justly admired that description of the martlet’s resort to Macbeth’s dwelling as a charming image of repose, following by way of contrast the lively picture of the fight. More justly still has praise been always lavished on the powerful representation of the horrible in that night wandering of Lady Macbeth, in the banquet scene, and in the dismal creation of the weird sisters. And far above all this is the speaking truth of the scenes at the murder of Duncan, which produce a powerful effect even in the most imperfect representation. The fearful whispered conference, in the horrible dimness of which the pair arrange and complete their atrocious project; the heartrending portraiture of Macbeth’s state of mind at the deed itself; the uneasy half-waking condition of the sacrificed attendants, one of whom dreams on of the evening feast, the other, in paralysed consciousness, seems to anticipate the impending atrocity; lastly, the external terrors of the night, presenting a foreboding contrast to the tumult of merriment over the yawning graves; all this is so perfectly natural, and wrought to such powerful effect with so little art, that it would be difficult to find its equal in the poetry of any age.”

MIDDLETON'S "WITCH" AND THE TEXT  
OF "MACBETH."

The most difficult points in the literary history of *Macbeth* are its relation<sup>1</sup> to Middleton's play *The Witch*, and the theory of interpolations in the text.

The stage-directions of *Macbeth* refer to two songs (see p. 257) evidently introduced into the performance of the play, and evidently so familiar that a reference to them was considered sufficient by the editors of the 1st Folio. The songs are "Come away, come away" (III. 5), and "Black spirits" (IV. 1). These songs—or, rather, two songs beginning respectively with the same words as the songs referred to in the Folio and presumably identical with them—occur in Davenant's version (1674) of *Macbeth*. The authorship of the songs appears to have been ascribed formerly to Davenant, despite the awkwardness of the dates<sup>2</sup>. But in the latter part of the 18th century it was discovered that the songs were not Davenant's. A MS. copy of a tragi-comedy written by Thomas Middleton and entitled *The Witch* came to light and was published in 1778. *The Witch* contains (a) the two songs, (b) a supernatural element of the same general character as the Witches-element

<sup>1</sup> What is said on this subject is mainly summarised from the best modern authorities.

<sup>2</sup> The references to the songs in the 1st Folio (1623) show that they existed, in some form or other, at least fifty years before Davenant's recast of *Macbeth* appeared. Davenant himself was born in 1605.

in *Macbeth*, and (c) certain verbal resemblances<sup>1</sup> to Shakespeare's play in the incantation-scenes.

What, then, is the relation of *The Witch* to *Macbeth*?

It were waste of time to dwell on the hypothesis that Shakespeare and Middleton wrote *Macbeth* in combination, or that *The Witch* was the earlier play, and that therefore it was Shakespeare who imitated Middleton and purloined his songs (Shakespeare's own songs being one of the glories of his work). No responsible critic nowadays supports either view. Middleton's ablest editor<sup>2</sup> states that quite apart from this *Macbeth*-problem (*The Witch* must certainly be referred to the later part of Middleton's career, after 1610, when he gave up writing "lively comedies of intrigue" and began that series of tragic works of which *The Witch* was probably the prelude. Again, "the use of semi-supernatural beings is altogether alien to Middleton's realistic manner"; and the natural inference is that he was moved to write *The Witch* by the example of *Macbeth*—in fact, that he tried to repeat Shakespeare's success. Further, it has been pointed out that Middleton frequently imitates Shakespeare<sup>3</sup> in his other plays; nor must it be forgotten that some general resemblances between *Macbeth* and *The Witch* were inevitable. Both are full of the conventional rites and traditions of demonology, and the main source<sup>4</sup> of the witch-lore in each was the same, viz. Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). Hence the

<sup>1</sup> See III. 5. 13, 20 (notes). One is reminded also of *Macbeth*, II. 2. 6, by *The Witch*, IV. 3. 17—19 (spoken by Francisca, in a similar context):

"For the maid-servants and the girls o' th' house,  
I spie'd them lately with a drowsy posset,  
They will not hear in haste."

<sup>2</sup> A. H. Bullen. See his Introduction to Middleton's *Works*, vol. 1. pp. lii—lvii.

<sup>3</sup> Thus I notice an obvious imitation of *Othello* in *The Witch*, IV. 3. 53—55.

<sup>4</sup> See the foot-note on p. 258. Shakespeare's familiarity with the *Discoverie* may safely be assumed.

general likeness between *Macbeth* and *The Witch*, and the minor touches of verbal similarity, are accounted for, fully and reasonably, by the hypothesis of Middleton's imitation of Shakespeare and by the identity of the source of information on which the two writers drew for the cult and conventions of witchcraft.

But the references in *Macbeth* to Middleton's two songs still remain to be accounted for. The simplest explanation is this: that they were introduced into *Macbeth* by the actors. The supernatural portion of *Macbeth* has always appealed strongly to popular taste. One reason is that it gives great scope for the musical element. Music rarely fails to add effectiveness to a play, and music<sup>1</sup> has been consistently a great feature in the representation<sup>2</sup> of *Macbeth*. The players, therefore, had a strong motive for inserting the songs, and *The Witch* is the very play to which they might be expected to have recourse. Not only did it resemble *Macbeth*, but it involved no difficulties of copyright. Middleton himself wrote for the King's Players (Shakespeare's company) during the period 1615—1624. Indeed, it would appear that the same company performed in both plays at the Blackfriars Theatre: what simpler, then, than to transfer a couple of songs from one to the other? Being so well known to the actors they would not need to be written out in the acting-copies of *Macbeth*: a brief reference at the point where each had to be introduced would serve: and when *Macbeth* came to be printed from one of these stage-versions (as other evidence<sup>3</sup> leads us to believe was the case), the brief references in the stage-directions would be left unchanged by

<sup>1</sup> The best known incidental music to *Macbeth* is, of course, that commonly attributed to the Restoration composer Lock. But Dr Ward says (III. 330): "I learn on excellent authority, that the music to *Macbeth* by Lock was different from that popularly called by his name, and is not known to exist." His authority for the statement is not indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Fleay, *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. the obvious textual errors which show that the 1st Folio's version of *Macbeth* was not printed from Shakespeare's original ms.

the editors of the 1st Folio because they knew that the two songs, from being sung in both plays, would be almost as familiar to the average reader and playgoer as to the actors themselves.

This theory seems to offer a simple, yet complete explanation how Middleton's songs found their way into *Macbeth* as printed in the 1st Folio.

A far less simple theory is, that the best parts of both songs were really written by Shakespeare, but were only alluded to, not quoted fully, in the particular stage-version of *Macbeth* used by the editors of the Folio, who did not trouble to consult any other version; that Middleton appropriated and expanded them for *The Witch* (in other words, that Shakespeare wrote the good and Middleton the bad<sup>1</sup> lines); and that then Davenant<sup>2</sup> took them either from *The Witch* or from some actor's copy of *Macbeth* in which they *had* been copied out in full.

But hypotheses which involve a double authorship are things to be avoided where possible, nor does this theory explain so satisfactorily the bare references to the songs in the stage-directions. No doubt, songs were often omitted altogether from the printed copies of plays. The MS. of a song might be given to the composer who was to set it to music: hence its separation from the rest of the text, and possible loss. "None of Lyly's charming songs, for example, are included in the first editions of his plays<sup>3</sup>." (Apparently, a song (if not two) has been lost in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. 404. Still, with this doubtful exception, there is no known instance in all Shakespeare's other plays.) Moreover one can understand the absolute omission of a song, through some mischance, from the MS. of a play and so from the 1st Folio, or a reference, in a stage-direction, to an interpolated song by some other

<sup>1</sup> The inequality of the songs is certainly remarkable, and a point in favour of this theory.

<sup>2</sup> The songs as given by Davenant present some differences of reading when compared with *The Witch*; but the differences have no bearing on the general issue.

<sup>3</sup> Bullen.

writer; but a reference to one of Shakespeare's own songs is an anomaly hard to accept.

The other hypothesis, that Middleton wrote and the actors inserted "Come away, come away," and "Black spirits," is much simpler. It is the theory that now finds favour.

The references, then, to these songs involve less difficulty than might appear on a first consideration. Unfortunately, they gave rise to a theory<sup>1</sup> that other parts of *Macbeth* are not the work of Shakespeare. Briefly, this theory is to the effect that after Shakespeare's withdrawal from the stage *Macbeth* underwent a revision for theatrical purposes by some writer, who increased the supernatural element and inserted other passages. The writer on whom this responsibility has been thrust is naturally Middleton, as the probable author of the two songs we have been discussing. The chief portions of *Macbeth* which have been condemned as his interpolations are these :

Act I. Sc. 2 (the Sergeant's scene) and Sc. 3. 1—37 (the Witches' dialogue up to the entrance of Macbeth and Banquo); Act II. Sc. 3, commencement (the Porter's scene); all the Hecate parts (Act III. Sc. 5, Act IV. Sc. 1. 39—47, and the First Witch's speech in the same scene, 125—132); Act IV. Sc. 3. 135—154 (the "King's Evil" passage); Act V. Sc. 8. 35—75 (the tragedy's close): together with the following lines<sup>2</sup>—II. I. 61, V. 5. 47—50, V. 8. 32, 33 (from "Before" to "shield").

Now the question of the authenticity of a passage commonly resolves into a question of style, and style is *the* uncertain quantity of literature. *Quot homines tot sententiæ*: what is essentially Shakespeare's work in the eyes of one critic may not approve itself as Shakespearian at all to another. Thus, whereas those who originated this notion of interpolations

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Furness, pp. 391—393.

<sup>2</sup> The first of them (II. I. 61) expresses a thought most characteristic of *Macbeth* (see the note, and compare III. 4. 139, 140, IV. 1. 146—148), and the rhyme conveys the impression of a decisive resolution, as elsewhere (e.g. in I. 4. 52, 53). In the second passage (V. 5. 47—50) it certainly seems arbitrary to pick out four of the rhymed lines and leave two (51, 52).

pronounced the metre of the Sergeant's scene (I. 2) to be "not like Shakespeare's work" and the phraseology to be "not like Shakespeare's language," a modern critic whose word carries very great weight finds a "profusion of Shakespearean touches" scattered through the scene. Similarly against the very positive statement that "if the fifth scene of Act III. had occurred in a drama not attributed to Shakespeare no one would have discovered in it any trace of Shakespeare's manner," may be set the opinion of the same critic that the scene is marked by "graceful artifices of fancy suggestive of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*." Clearly, inferences from style are precarious, and much depends on the personal equation.

Apart from its style two points in the Sergeant's scene have been adduced as evidence of its unauthenticity, viz. the alleged discrepancy between lines 52, 53 and I. 3. 72, 73 and III—III4, and the supposed "absurdity of sending a severely wounded soldier to carry the news of a victory." But the discrepancy is, to my mind, quite explicable—indeed, effective as a touch of dissimulation—in regard to Macbeth at least (see I. 3. 72, 73, note); nor may it be quite outside the bounds of experience or probability that a wounded man should be the bearer of the news of success, while from the stage point of view the Sergeant's state increases greatly the force of his description and the picturesqueness and dramatic appeal of the whole episode. The positive evidence in favour of the authenticity of the scene, besides the fact of its inclusion in the Folio, is that it has a very close, almost essential relation to the evolution of the play (see I. 2. 68, note), and that to remove it dislocates the opening altogether. For it is quite obvious that if this scene is absent, the action must pass immediately from the first exit of the Witches (I. I. 12) to the first entrance of Macbeth (I. 3. 38). Hence it is not surprising that the commencement of Scene 3 (I—37) was found to be non-Shakespearean: its rejection was the necessary corollary of the rejection of the preceding scene. Yet what difference of style is it really possible to trace between I. 3. 1—37 and IV. I. 1—38? And without the prelude of incantation how tamely the scene opens!



The authenticity of the "Porter's<sup>1</sup> scene" (II. 3) is now recognised on all hands (see pp. 138, 139). I do not think that any eminent critic, of the present day, echoes Coleridge's condemnation (one of the very few of his unhappy inspirations). Perhaps the chief motive for rejecting the scene was its coarseness (as it stands in the Folio).

The Hecate parts we will pass over, for the moment.

The "King's Evil" passage (IV. 3. 135—154) is of a piece with the general complimentary purpose of the whole play. Though more of personal and less of national import than the specific compliment in IV. I. 120, 121 (the accession passage), it is on much the same footing.

Against the genuineness of the tragedy's close (v. 8. 35—75) the only objections brought are these: that there is a confusion in the stage-directions at v. 8. 34 (see note); that the description of Lady Macbeth as this "fiend-like queen" disturbs the feeling of sympathy with her which the spectacle of her terrible suffering has roused; and that Shakespeare would not "have drawn away the veil which with his fine tact he had drawn over her fate," by telling us that she had committed suicide (v. 8. 70, 71). But confusion in the stage-directions is not a very uncommon occurrence in the 1st Folio. Again, Shakespeare bids us, indeed, pity suffering and not withhold the *lacrimæ rerum*; but it is never his purpose to move the sentiment which condones sin by regarding the endurance of its penalties as almost an absolution from its guilt. It is a juster criticism, to my mind, that Malcolm's description—he is speaking, be it observed, of Macbeth as well as Lady Macbeth, and the bitterness of his words is absolutely appropriate to the speaker—is "a necessary antidote to the sympathy excited by their just punishment and the retribution of their crimes." "Butcher" is true of the one, and "fiend-like" of the other's action, though not of her character, and the sternness of the dramatist's justice drives the truth home. Moreover, where else does Shakespeare "draw a veil" over the fate of his great characters? No veils are drawn in the last scenes (say) of *Hamlet* and *Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Finally, the

<sup>1</sup> A "character derived from the Porter of Hell in the old Mysteries."

close of *Macbeth* bears a most marked resemblance to the close of *Hamlet*, Malcolm taking the place of "young Fortinbras."

The whole theory of interpolations as it affects the Sergeant's scene, the Witches' part in I. 3. 1—37, the Porter's scene, the "King's Evil" passage, and the last forty lines of *Macbeth*, appears to me to be untenable. It was unknown to the older race of critics and scholars, and among those of the present day it may, I think, be said to be discredited. On the other hand, the theory as it affects the Hecate parts<sup>1</sup> (some forty lines) finds able adherents, on these grounds: that Hecate is a superfluous character; that she represents a mythology entirely separate from that embodied in the "Weird Sisters" and introduces suggestions of an alien, incongruous fairy-lore (IV. 1. 41—43); that the style of her long speech—smooth, lyrical, graceful—is the antithesis of their mingled grotesqueness and terror of dialogue and incantation, and that the rhythm is "iambic," instead of "trochaic."

It appears to me that each of these points may be met fairly. Hecate, it is true, does not seem to advance the action of the play at all; but it is arguable that she has been designedly held in reserve by the dramatist. Macbeth's second interview with the Witches is far more elaborate than the first, their task much more onerous; and from the fact that they "now work upon him under the direction of their Queen," may we not infer that Shakespeare deliberately abstained from employing at the outset the full resources and apparatus of witchcraft, in the lesser task of merely suggesting the idea of kingship to Macbeth and Banquo? Moreover, the supernatural element in *Macbeth* must be judged from the standpoint of Elizabethan convention in witchcraft, and from this standpoint Hecate plays a part that, if not indispensable, was traditional. Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queens* provides an apt parallel. He brings in eleven Witches

<sup>1</sup> The speech of the First Witch in IV. 1. 125—132 has been also included in the condemnation, because the Witches are hostile to Macbeth and he to them (cf. IV. 1. 48, 49). But surely her good-natured tone is ironical and mocking.

who suddenly suspend their rites with an invocation to "their chief" to be present.

"Sisters, stay, we want our Dame;  
Call upon her by her name,"

cries one of the Witches, and thereupon they chant three "charms," till at length the Dame appears. Ben Jonson's note<sup>1</sup> on the lines just quoted is: "Amongst our vulgar witches, the honour of dame (for so I translate it) is given with a kind of pre-eminence to some special one at their meetings"; and then follow various references to the authoritative exponents of demonology. Hecate, I take it, acts as "the Dame" of the Witches of *Macbeth*, a traditional and certainly a picturesque figure, who fulfils a part without which their meetings might have seemed incomplete. And this part is assigned to her because in Elizabethan superstition (the derivative of classical and mediæval magic) she is essentially *the* goddess of the black arts. Thus she is solemnly apostrophised in the *Masque of Queens*, and Jonson comments: "she was believed to govern in witchcraft; and is remembered in all their invocations." Illustrations to the same effect might be multiplied, e.g. from Shakespeare's<sup>2</sup> own works—compare indeed *Macbeth*, II. I. 51, 52—Scot's *Discoverie*, King James's *Demonologie*. My conclusion, therefore, is that Hecate's introduction into *Macbeth* is at least explicable as a piece of the orthodox machinery of witchcraft. Tradition inspired what dramatic economy might, perhaps, have dispensed with.

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to observe that he cites more than once "the King's Majesty's book (our sovereign) of Demonology," and refers to "the known story of King Duffe" being bewitched; see I. 3. 18—23, note. Jonson's *Masque* and his commentary on it are a compendium of witch-lore. What he writes—and he writes as an Aristarchus from whose dicta there can be no appeal—may be regarded as the last word of Elizabethan learning and authority on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. 391, *Hamlet*, III. 2. 269, *King Lear*, I. I. 112. See also Milton, *Comus*, 135, *Paradise Lost*, II. 662 (Pitt Press notes).

That in an artistic sense Hecate is an intruder must be admitted. Her presence in these wild surroundings involves a blending of classical with Teutonic mythology. Hecate is a manifestation of Diana, and Diana and her "nymphs" are the forerunners of the fairies<sup>1</sup>; indeed, Shakespeare's title<sup>2</sup> for the Queen of the Fairies in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is but an alternative title of Diana. Hence Hecate brings with her those reminiscences of the fairy-lore of the early comedy, and those suggestions of classical lore, which strike a note of incongruity in supernatural scenes based on the ruder, fiercer myths of Northern Europe. But incongruity of this kind is a common feature of Elizabethan literature. The fairy-lore of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*<sup>3</sup>, for example, is essentially a composite fabric. It blends "the elves of the village with the fays of romance:" not a remote parallel, surely, to the fusion of mythological associations in *Macbeth*; and the whole comedy (or Masque-comedy) is a medley of the semi-classical and the mediæval and romantic. Similarly, there is a distinct element of Elizabethan colouring in Shakespeare's plays founded on Roman history. Incongruity, therefore, counts for little. It may be noted, too, that Holinshed expressly speaks of "the three *faries* or weird sisters<sup>4</sup>," and so may have suggested the comparison in IV. I. 41—43.

<sup>1</sup> There was a general tendency in the Middle Ages to identify fairies and elves with the "nymphs" and "satyrs" of classical mythology. Diana was supposed to be attended by a train of "nymphs," so that when these were regarded as fairies, Diana came to be regarded commonly as the fairy queen. Keightley refers to King James's *Demonologie*, which speaks of the class of spirits that "by the Gentiles [i.e. the Greeks and Romans] was called *Diana* and her wandering court [i.e. 'nymphs'], and amongst us was called the *Phairie*." See Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, ed. Stallybras, pp. 431—436; A. Maury, *Les Fées du Moyen-Age*, p. 62. Note Holinshed, **Extract 2**, lines 6 and 7 ("some nymphs or feiries").

<sup>2</sup> *Titanus* was used of the sun-god, and *Titania* was applied to Diana as his sister; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III. 171.

<sup>3</sup> See Introduction to Pitt Press ed., pp. xxv—xxx.

<sup>4</sup> **Extract 15.**

Again, as the greater includes the less, the different style of the Hecate-scene (III. 5) is covered. She must speak in her own character; and the style that fits the grim, barbaric beings of northern superstition would be totally inappropriate to the sovereign lady of Greek enchantment.

Finally, the alternation of so-called iambic and trochaic metres marks Shakespeare's supernatural scenes in general. The classical, iambic rhythm, with its statelier movement, is naturally assigned to the classical goddess, and the impulsive, trochaic rhythm to the Witches<sup>1</sup>.

The case, therefore, against the authenticity of the Hecate parts seems to me to be no stronger than that against the other suspected scenes. It is equally a modern invention. In fact, the whole theory of interpolations, so far as I can judge, wants solid foundation.

Nor can one accept without misgiving the current<sup>2</sup> opinion that the 1st Folio's version of *Macbeth* gives us only a compressed stage-version of what Shakespeare wrote. The tragedy, says one critic, has come down to us in a "shamefully mutilated form....We can feel distinctly where the gaps occur." But can we? Which are the parts where "omissions are distinctly felt," what motives of action are imperfectly worked out, what scenes or speeches appear curtailed, where are the inconsistencies of characterisation and plot that might be expected to occur in a play that had been ruthlessly mangled by the "abhorred shears" of the theatrical manager? We get scant enlightening on the subject. Apart from the disputable case (I. 3. 72, 73) already mentioned, I have come across but one alleged instance of these alleged omissions—and the instance is palpably no instance at all. For the rest, the only definite, tangible piece of evidence adduced in support of this theory of compression is the brevity of *Macbeth*. "The abnormal shortness of the play is in itself an indication of what has happened." Yet, there is another, much

<sup>1</sup> Their parts, however, are not "all trochaic"; the student can find iambic lines (e.g. I. 3. 30—32).

<sup>2</sup> I must admit that it *is* the current view.

simpler explanation of this shortness : *Macbeth* has no underplot. With an underplot its length would be normal. From the point of view of brevity *Macbeth* cannot be compared with plays like *Richard III.*, which represent the diffuse, historical drama, or with involved tragedies like *King Lear*, in which the main theme is complicated by an elaborate, subsidiary theme. Though based on what professed to be history, *Macbeth* is not a historical play at all; nor is its action complex. The theme is essentially simple but self-sufficient, and the dramatist's design seems to have been that its horror should be unobscured and its evolution unimpeded by side-issues and complications. It requires a good deal of courage to cavil at the result as handed down.

The disintegrating method of Shakespearian criticism, with its facile hypotheses of earlier and later versions, divided authorship, interpolations, and acting-editions taking the place of the originals, seems to have been carried too far. A return to more cautious principles and more faith in the Folio would be no misfortune. As regards *Macbeth* in particular, no one, of course, would pledge himself to the assertion that it has reached us in the precise form in which Shakespeare left it: there are manifest textual errors, and we cannot tell how Shakespeare's unprinted MSS. fared during the period between his withdrawal to Stratford and the publication of the 1st Folio (i.e. between 1611 and 1623). But we may recognise and allow for these facts without embarking on the highly problematic theory of extensive interpolation, or the at least doubtful theory of mutilation.

# MACBETH.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DUNCAN, King of Scotland.

MALCOLM, }  
DONALBAIN, } his sons.

MACBETH, }  
BANQUO, } generals of the King's army.

MACDUFF, }  
LENNOX, }  
ROSS, } noblemen of Scotland.  
MENTEITH, }  
ANGUS, }  
CAITHNESS, }

FLEANCE, son to Banquo.

SIWARD, Earl of Northumberland, general of the English forces. *incl. to Malcol*

Young SIWARD, his son.

SEYTON, an officer attending on Macbeth.

Boy, son to Macduff.

An English Doctor.

A Scotch Doctor.

A Sergeant.

A Porter.

An Old Man.

Lady MACBETH.

Lady MACDUFF.

Gentlewoman attending on Lady Macbeth.

Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, Soldiers, Murderers, Attendants,  
and Messengers.

Hecate.

Three Witches.

Apparitions.

SCENE : *Scotland; England.*



# MACBETH.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I. *A desert place.*

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches.*

*First Witch.* When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

*Second Witch.* When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.

*Third Witch.* That will be ere the set of sun. 5

*First Witch.* Where the place?

*Second Witch.* Upon the heath.

*Third Witch.* There to meet with Macbeth.

*First Witch.* I come, Graymalkin!

*Second Witch.* Paddock calls.

*Third Witch.* Anon! 10

*All.* Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *A camp near Forres.*

*Alarum within. Enter* DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, *with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Sergeant.*

*Duncan.* What bloody man is that? He can report,  
As seemeth by his plight, (of the revolt  
The newest state.)

*Malcolm.* This is the sergeant,  
Who, like a good and hardy soldier, fought  
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend! 5  
Say to the king the knowledge of the broil  
As thou didst leave it.

*Sergeant.* Doubtful it stood; (*epical*  
As two spent swimmers, that do cling together  
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—  
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that 10  
The multiplying villanies of nature  
Do swarm upon him—from the western isles  
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;  
And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,  
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak: 15  
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—  
Disdaining fortune, with (his brandish'd steel,  
Which smoked with bloody execution,)  
Like valour's minion carv'd out his passage  
Till he faced the slave; 20  
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

*Duncan.* O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!"

*Sergeant.* (As) whence) the sun 'gins his reflection 25

Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break ;  
 So from that spring, whence comfort seem'd to come,  
 Discomfort swells. Mark, king of Scotland, mark :  
 No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,  
 Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels, 30  
 But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage,  
 With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men,  
 Began a fresh assault.

*Duncan.* Dismay'd not this

Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

*Sergeant.* Yes ;

- As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion. 35

If I say sooth, I must report they were

*mach* - As cannons overcharg'd with double cracks ; so they

Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe :

Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,

- Or memorizè another Golgotha, 40

I cannot tell :—

But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

*Duncan.* So well thy words become thee as thy wounds ;

- They smack of honour both. Go get him surgeons.

[*Exit Sergeant, attended.*]

Who comes here?

*Malcolm.* The worthy thane of Ross. 45

*Lennox.* What a haste looks through his eyes ! (So  
 should he look

That seems to speak things strange.)

*Enter Ross.*

*Ross.* God save the king !

*Dun.* Whence camest thou, worthy thane?

*Ross.* From Fife, great king ;

Where the Norwegian banners flout the sky

And fan our people cold. Norway himself, 50  
 With terrible numbers,  
 Assisted by that most disloyal traitor  
 The thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict;  
 Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof, *Car me 1100*  
 Confronted him with self-comparisons, 55  
 Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm,  
 Curbing his lavish spirit: ~~and~~, to conclude,  
 The victory fell on us.

*Duncan.* Great happiness!

*Ross.* That now

Sweno, the Norway's king, craves composition; *(Bellona's)* 60  
 Nor would we deign him burial of his men  
 Till he disbursed, at Saint Colme's inch,  
 Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

*Duncan.* No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive  
 Our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death, 65  
 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

*Ross.* I'll see it done. \ *R*

*Duncan.* What he hath lost | noble Macbeth hath won. \ *R*  
*title* [Exeunt.]

### SCENE III. *A heath.*

*Thunder.* Enter the three Witches.

*First Witch.* Where hast thou been, sister?

*Second Witch.* Killing swine.

*Third Witch.* Sister, where thou?

*First Witch.* A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,  
 And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd:—"Give  
 me," quoth I: 5

“Aroint thee, witch!” the rump-fed ronyon cries.  
 Her husband’s to Aleppo gone, master o’ the “Tiger” :  
 But in a sieve I’ll thither sail,  
 And, like a rat without a tail,  
 I’ll do, I’ll do, and I’ll do.

10

*Second Witch.* I’ll give thee a wind.

*First Witch.* Thou art kind.

*Third Witch.* And I another.

*First Witch.* I myself have all the other ;

And the very ports they blow,  
 All the quarters that they know  
 I’ the shipman’s card.

15

I will drain him dry as hay :

Sleep shall neither night nor day

Hang upon his pent-house lid ;

20

He shall live a man forbid :

Weary se’n-nights nine times nine

Shall he dwindle, peak and pine :

Though his bark cannot be lost,

Yet it shall be tempest-tost.

25

Look what I have.

*Second Witch.* Show me, show me.

*First Witch.* Here I have a pilot’s thumb,  
 Wreck’d as homeward he did come. [*Drum within.*]

*Third Witch.* A drum, a drum !

30

Macbeth doth come.

*All.* The weird sisters, hand in hand,  
Posters of the sea and land,

Thus do go about, about :

Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,

35

And thrice again, to make up nine.

Peace! the charm’s wound up.

*Enter* MACBETH *and* BANQUO.

*Macbeth.* So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

*Banquo.* How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these  
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire, 40  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't? Live you? or (are you aught  
That man may question?) You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women, 45  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

*Macbeth.* Speak, if you can: what are you?

*First Witch.* All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane  
of Glamis!

*Second Witch.* All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane  
of Cawdor! *irony of situation.*

*Third Witch.* All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king  
hereafter! 50

*Banquo.* Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner  
You greet with present grace and great prediction 55  
Of noble having and of royal hope,  
That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not:  
If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear 60  
Your favours nor your hate.

*First Witch.* Hail!

*Second Witch.* Hail!

*Third Witch.* Hail!

*First Witch.* Lesser than Macbeth, and greater. 65

*Second Witch.* Not so happy, yet much happier.

*Third Witch.* Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:

So, all hail, Macbeth and Banquo! 3 *compliment as yet*

*First Witch.* Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

*Macbeth.* Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more: 70

By Sinel's death I know I am thane of Glamis;

But how of Cawdor? the thane of Cawdor lives,

A prosperous gentleman; and to be king *inconsistent*

Stands not within the prospect of belief, *1. 2. 30-*

No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence, 75

You owe this strange intelligence? or why

Upon this blasted heath you stop our way

With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.)

[*Witches vanish.*]

*Banquo.* The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,  
And these are of them: whither are they vanish'd? 80

*Macbeth.* Into the air; and what seem'd corporal melted  
As breath into the wind. Would they had stay'd!

*Banquo.* Were such things here as we do speak about?  
Or have we eaten on the insane root  
That takes the reason prisoner? 85.

*Macbeth.* Your children shall be kings.

*Banquo.* You shall be king.

*Macbeth.* And thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?

*Banquo.* To the selfsame tune and words. Who's here?

*Enter ROSS and ANGUS.*

*Ross.* The king hath happily received, Macbeth,  
The news of thy success: and when he reads 90

Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,

His wonders and his praises do contend

1st example of the re-curent, homely image. [ACT I.]

10

MACBETH.

Which should be thine or his: silenc'd with that,  
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,  
He finds thee in the stout Norwegian ranks, 95  
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,  
Strange images of death. As thick as hail  
Came post with post; and every one did bear  
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,  
And pour'd them down before him.

*Angus.*

We are sent 100

To give thee from our royal master thanks;  
Only to herald thee into his sight,  
Not pay thee.

*Ross.* And, for an <sup>Hedge</sup> earnest of a greater honour,  
He bade me, from him, call thee thane of Cawdor: 105  
In which <sup>subal</sup> addition, hail, most worthy thane!  
For it is thine.

*Banquo.* [*Aside*] What, can the devil speak true? (D)

*Macb.* The thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me  
In borrow'd robes?

*Angus.*

<sup>He</sup> Who was the thane lives yet;

But under heavy judgment bears that life 110  
Which he deserves to lose. <sup>act</sup> Whether he was combined  
With those of Norway, or did line the rebel  
With hidden help and vantage, or that with both  
He labour'd in his country's wreck, I know not;  
But treasons capital, confess'd and proved, 115  
Have overthrown him.

*Macbeth.* [*Aside*] Glamis, and thane of Cawdor!

The greatest is behind.—[*To Ross and Angus*] Thanks  
for your pains.—

[*To Banquo*] Do you not hope your children shall be kings,  
When those that gave the thane of Cawdor to me  
Promised no less to them?



*Banquo.* That, trusted home, 120  
 Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,  
 Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange:  
 And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
 The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's 125  
In deepest consequence.  
 Cousins, a word, I pray you.

*Macbeth.* [*Aside*] Two truths are told,  
 As happy prologues to the swelling act  
 Of the imperial theme.)—I thank you, gentlemen.—  
 [*Aside*] This supernatural soliciting 130  
 Cannot be ill; cannot be good: (if ill,  
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion? (?)  
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair, 135  
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
 Against the use of nature? Present fears  
 Are less than horrible imaginings:  
 My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
 Shakes so my single state of man that function 140  
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.

*Banquo.* Look, how our partner's rapt.

*Macbeth.* [*Aside*] If chance will have me king, why,  
 chance may crown me,

= Without my stir.

*Banquo.* New honours come upon him,  
 Like our (strange garments, cleave not to their mould 145  
 But with the aid of use.)

*Macbeth.* [*Aside*] Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

*Banquo.* Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

*Macb.* Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought  
With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains 150  
Are register'd where every day I turn

The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.

[*To Banquo*] Think upon what hath chanced; and, at  
more time,

The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak

Our free hearts each to other.

*Banquo.*

Very gladly.

155

*Macbeth.* Till then, enough.—Come, friends.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *Forres. The palace.*

*Flourish.* Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN,  
LENNOX, and Attendants.

*Duncan.* Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
Those in commission yet return'd?

*Malcolm.*

My liege,

They are not yet come back. But I have spoke

With one that saw him die: who did report

That very frankly he confess'd his treasons, 5

Implored your highness' pardon, and set forth

A deep repentance: nothing in his life

Became him like the leaving it; he died

As one that had been studied in his death,

To throw away the dearest thing he owed, 10

As 'twere a careless trifle.

*Duncan.*

There's no art

To find the mind's construction in the face;  
 He was "a gentleman" on whom I built  
 An absolute trust.

*Enter* (MACBETH, BANQUO, (ROSS, and ANGUS.)

O worthiest cousin!

The sin of my ingratitude even now  
 Was heavy on me: thou art so far before, 15  
 That swiftest wing of recompense is slow  
 To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,  
 That the proportion both of thanks and payment  
 Might have been mine! only I have left to say, 20  
 More is thy due than more than all can pay.

*Macbeth.* The service and the loyalty I owe,  
 In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part  
 Is to receive our duties; and our duties 25  
 Are to your throne and state children and servants;  
 Which do but what they should, by doing every thing  
 Safe toward your love and honour.

*Duncan.* Welcome hither:

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour  
 To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,  
 That hast no less deserved, nor must be known 30  
 No less to have done so; let me infold thee  
 And hold thee to my heart.

*Banquo.* There if I grow,  
 The harvest is your own.

*Duncan.* My plenteous joys,  
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves  
 In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes, 35  
 And you whose places are the nearest, know,  
 We will establish our estate upon

Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter  
 The Prince of Cumberland: (which honour must  
 Not unaccompanied invest him only,  
 But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
 On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,  
 And bind us further to you.

*Macbeth.* The rest is labour, which is not used for you:  
 I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful  
 The hearing of my wife with your approach:  
 So humbly take my leave. 45

*Duncan.* My worthy Cawdor!

*Macb.* [*Aside*] The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step,  
 On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
 For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;  
 Let not light see my black and deep desires:  
 The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,  
 Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. [*Exit.* 50

*Duncan.* True, worthy Banquo; he is full so valiant,  
 And in his commendations I am fed;  
 It is a banquet to me. Let's after him,  
 Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:  
 It is a peerless kinsman. [*Flourish. Exeunt.* 55

SCENE V. *Inverness.* MACBETH'S castle.

*Enter Lady MACBETH, reading a letter.*

*Lady Macbeth.* "They met me in the day of success; and  
 I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in  
 them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to  
 question them further, they made themselves air, into which  
 they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came  
 missives from the king, who all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor';

(1) light may  
 a scene  
 be introduced  
 by it  
 40

(2)

by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, king that shalt be!' This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell." 12

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be  
 What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;  
 It is too full o' the milk of human kindness 15  
 To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;  
 Art not without ambition, but without  
 The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,  
 That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
 And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'dst have, great Glamis,  
 That which cries "Thus thou must do, if thou have it"; 21  
 And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
 Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,  
 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
 And chastise with the valour of my tongue 25  
 All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
 Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
 To have thee crown'd withal.

*Enter a Messenger.*

What is your tidings?

*Messenger.* The king comes here to-night.

*Lady Macbeth.* Thou'rt mad to say it: 30

Is not thy master with him? who, were't so,  
 Would have inform'd for preparation.

*Messenger.* So please you, it is true: our thane is coming:  
 One of my fellows had the speed of him;  
 Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more  
 Than would make up his message.

*Lady Macbeth.* Give him tending; 35  
He brings great news. [Exit Messenger.

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements. (Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full 40  
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it! (Come) to my woman's breasts, 45  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief! (Come, thick night, <sup>(3)</sup> light  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, <sub>may</sub>  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes, 50  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry "Hold, hold!"

*Enter* MACBETH.

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!  
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!  
Thy letters have transported me beyond  
This ignorant present, and I feel now 55  
The future in the instant.

*Macbeth.* My dearest love,  
Duncan comes here to-night.

*Lady Macbeth.* And when goes hence?

*Macbeth.* To-morrow, as he purposes.

*Lady Macbeth.* O, never  
Shall sun that morrow see!

Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
 May read strange matters: to beguile the time, 60  
 Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
 Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,  
 But be the serpent under't. He that's coming  
 Must be provided for: and you shall put 65  
 This night's great business into my dispatch;  
 Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
 Give solely sovereign sway and' masterdom. ) R.

*Macbeth.* We will speak further. M

*Lady Macbeth.*

Only look up clear;

To alter favour ever is to fear: 70

Leave all the rest to me.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *Before MACBETH'S castle.*

*Hautboys.* Servants of MACBETH attending, with torches.

*Enter* DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO,  
 LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS, and Attendants.

*Duncan.* This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
 Nimble and sweetly recommends itself  
 Unto our gentle senses.

*Banquo.* This guest of summer,  
 The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,  
 By his loved mansionry, that the heavens' breath 5  
 Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,  
 Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
 Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:  
 Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed  
 The air is delicate.

*Enter* Lady MACBETH.

*Duncan.* See, see, our honour'd hostess! 10

The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you  
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,  
And thank us for your trouble.

*Lady Macbeth.* All our service 15  
In every point twice done, and then done double,  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,  
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,  
We rest your hermits.

*Duncan.* Where's the thane of Cawdor? 20  
We coursed him at the heels, and had a purpose  
To be his purveyor: but he rides well;  
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him  
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,  
We are your guest to-night.

*Lady Macbeth.* Your servants ever 25  
Have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs, in compt,  
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,  
Still to return your own.

*Duncan.* Give me your hand;  
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,  
And shall continue our graces towards him. 30  
By your leave, hostess. [*Exeunt.*



*blood wings*  
*animal*

## SCENE VII. MACBETH'S castle.

*Hautboys and torches. Enter a Sewer, and divers Servants with dishes and service, and pass over the stage. Then enter MACBETH.*

*Macbeth.* If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
 It were done quickly: if the assassination  
 Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,  
 With his surcease, success; that but this blow  
 Might be the be-all and the end-all here, 5  
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
 We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases  
 We still have judgment here; that we but teach  
 Bloody instructions, which being taught return  
 To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice  
 Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice <sup>large</sup> 10  
 To our own lips. He's here in double trust: <sup>silver mine</sup>  
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, <sup>out.</sup>  
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
 Who should against his murderer shut the door, 15  
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
 Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against  
 The deep damnation of his taking-off; 20  
 And pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, horsed  
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye, <sup>speed.</sup>  
 That tears shall drown the wind.) I have no spur 25  
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
 And falls on the other.

*Enter Lady MACBETH.*

How now! what news?

*Lady Macbeth.* He has almost supp'd: why have you left the chamber?

*Macbeth.* Hath he ask'd for me?

*Lady Macbeth.* Know you not he has? 30

*Macbeth.* We will proceed no further in this business:

He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought

Golden opinions from all sorts of people,

Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,

Not cast aside so soon.

*Lady Macbeth.* Was the hope drunk 35

Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?

And wakes it now, to look so green and pale

At what it did so freely? From this time

Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard

To be the same in thine own act and valour 40

As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that

Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,

And live a coward in thine own esteem,

Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"

Like the poor cat i' the adage?

*Macbeth.*

Prithee, peace: 45

I dare do all that may become a man;

Who dares do more is none.

*Lady Macbeth.*

What beast was't then, 50

That made you break this enterprise to me?

When you durst do it, then you were a man;

And, to be more than what you were, you would

Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place

Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:

They have made themselves, and that their fitness now

Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know

How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me: *M* 55  
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
 Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
 Have done to this.

*Macbeth.* If we should fail? *M*

*Lady Macbeth.* We fail!

But screw your courage to the sticking-place, 60  
 And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep—  
 Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey  
 Soundly invite him—his two chamberlains  
 Will I with wine and wassail so convince,  
 That memory, the warder of the brain, 65  
 Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
 A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep  
 Their drenched natures lie as in a death,  
 What cannot you and I perform upon  
 The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon 70  
 His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
 Of our great quell?

*Macbeth.* Bring forth men-children only;  
 For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
 Nothing but males. Will it not be received,  
 When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two 75  
 Of his own chamber, and used their very daggers,  
 That they have done't?

*Lady Macbeth.* Who dares receive it other,  
 As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar  
 Upon his death?

*Macbeth.* I am settled, and bend up  
 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. 80  
 Away, and mock the time with fairest show:  
 False face must hide what the false heart doth know. [*Exeunt.*

## ACT II. 308

SCENE I. *Inverness. Court of MACBETH'S castle.**Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE, <sup>his son</sup> bearing a torch before him.**Banquo.* How goes the night, boy?*Fleance.* The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.*Banquo.* And she goes down at twelve.*Fleance.*

I take't, 'tis later, sir.

*Banquo.* Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven,Their candles are all out. Take thee that too. 5

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,

And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,

Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature

Gives way to in repose! Give me my sword.

Who's there? 10

*Enter MACBETH, and a Servant with a torch.**Macbeth.* A friend.*Banquo.* What, sir, not yet at rest? The king's a-bed:

He hath been in unusual pleasure, and

Sent forth great largess to your offices:

This diamond he greets your wife withal,

By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up

In measureless content. 15

*Macbeth.*

Being unprepared,

Our will became the servant to defect;

Which else should free have wrought.

*Banquo.*

All's well.

I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters : 20  
To you they have show'd some truth.

*Macbeth.* I think not of them :  
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,  
We would spend it in some words upon that business,  
If you would grant the time.

*Banquo.* At your kind'st leisure.

*Macbeth.* If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis, 25  
It shall make honour for you. *on what condition will Macbeth*

*Banquo.* So I lose none *helps Banquo*  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,  
I shall be counsell'd.

*Macbeth.* Good repose the while !

*Banquo.* Thanks, sir : the like to you ! 30

[*Exeunt Banquo and Fleance.*]

*Macbeth.* Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed. [*Exit Servant.*]

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee ;  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. 35

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
I see thee yet, in form as palpable 40  
As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going ; ||  
And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest : I see thee still ; 45  
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before. There's no such thing :

It is the bloody business which informs  
 Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world  
 Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse 50  
 The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
 Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder,  
 Alarum'd by his sentinel, 'the wolf,  
 Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design 55  
 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
 And take the present horror from the time,  
 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threath, he lives: / 60  
 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives. / R

[A bell rings.]

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.  
 Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell | R  
 That summons thee to heaven or to hell. [Exit.]

SCENE II. *The same.*

*Enter* Lady MACBETH.

*Lady Macbeth.* That which hath made them drunk  
 hath made me bold;  
 What hath quench'd them hath given me fire. Hark!  
 Peace!  
 It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,  
 Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it;  
 The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms 5  
 Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd their  
 possets,

That death and nature do contend about them,  
Whether they live or die.

*Macbeth.* [*Within*] Who's there? what, ho!

*Lady Macbeth.* Alack, I am afraid they have awaked, 10  
And 'tis not done: the attempt and not the deed  
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;  
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done't.

*Enter* MACBETH.

My husband!

*Macbeth.* I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear  
a noise? 15

*Lady Macb.* I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
Did not you speak?

*Macbeth.* When?

*Lady Macbeth.* Now.

*Macbeth.* As I descended?

*Lady Macbeth.* Ay.

*Macbeth.* Hark!

Who lies i' the second chamber?

*Lady Macbeth.* Donalbain. 20

*Macbeth.* This is a sorry sight. [*Looking on his hands.*

*Lady Macbeth.* A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

*Macbeth.* There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one  
cried "Murder!"

That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them.  
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them 25  
Again to sleep.

*Lady Macb.* There are two lodg'd together.

*Macbeth.* One cried "God bless us!" and "Amen!"  
the other;

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.

Listening their fear, I could not say "Amen!"  
When they did say "God bless us!"

*Lady Macbeth.* Consider it not so deeply. 30

*Macbeth.* But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?

I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"  
Stuck in my throat.

*Lady Macbeth.* These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

*Macbeth.* Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no  
more!" 35

Macbeth does murder sleep,"—the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast,—

*Lady Macbeth.* What do you mean? 40

*Macbeth.* Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the  
house:

"Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more: Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

*Lady Macbeth.* Who was it that thus cried? Why,  
worthy thane,

You do unbend your noble strength, to think 45

So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand. /

Why did you bring these daggers from the place?

They must lie there: go carry them, and smear  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

*Macbeth.* I'll go no more: 50

I am afraid to think what I have done;

Look on't again I dare not.

*Lady Macbeth.* Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead



Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood  
 That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
 I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,  
 For it must seem their guilt. [*Exit. Knocking within.*]

*Macbeth.*

Whence is that knocking?

How is't with me, when every noise appals me?

What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes!

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
 Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather  
 The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
 Making the green one red.

*Re-enter Lady MACBETH.*

*Lady Macb.* My hands are of your colour; but I shame  
 To wear a heart so white. [*Knocking within.*] I hear a  
 knocking

At the south entry: retire we to our chamber:

A little water clears us of this deed:

How easy is it, then! Your constancy

Hath left you unattended. [*Knocking within.*] Hark!  
 more knocking:

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,  
 And show us to be watchers: be not lost  
 So poorly in your thoughts.

*Macbeth.* To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

[*Knocking within.*]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE III.

*Enter a Porter. Knocking within.*

*Porter.* Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. [*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: come in time; have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't. [*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator. [*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose. [*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock; never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire. [*Knocking within.*] Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter. [*Opens the gate.*]

*Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX.*

*Macduff.* Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,  
That you do lie so late?

*Porter.* Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second cock.

*Macduff.* Is thy master stirring?

Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.

*Re-enter* MACBETH.

*Lennox.* Good morrow, noble sir.

*Macbeth.* Good morrow, both.

*Macduff.* Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

*Macbeth.* Not yet.

*Macduff.* He did command me to call timely on him :  
I have almost slipp'd the hour.

*Macbeth.* I'll bring you to him.

*Macduff.* I know this is a joyful trouble to you ; 30  
But yet 'tis one.

*Macbeth.* The labour we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.

*Macduff.* I'll make so bold to call,  
For 'tis my limited service. [Exit.

*Lennox.* Goes the king hence to-day?

*Macbeth.* He does : he did appoint so. 35

*Lennox.* The night has been unruly : where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down ; and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' th' air ; strange screams of death ;  
And prophesying, with accents terrible,  
Of dire combustion and confused events 40  
New hatch'd to the woful time : the obscure bird  
Clamour'd the livelong night : some say, the earth  
Was feverous and did shake.

*Macbeth.* 'Twas a rough night.

*Lennox.* My young remembrance cannot parallel  
A fellow to it. 45

*Re-enter* MACDUFF.

*Macduff.* O horror, horror, horror ! Tongue nor heart  
Cannot conceive nor name thee !

*Macbeth, Lennox.* What's the matter?

*Macduff.* Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!  
 Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope  
 The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence 50  
 The life o' the building!

*Macbeth.* What is't you say? the life?

*Lennox.* Mean you his majesty?

*Macduff.* Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight  
 With a new Gorgon: do not bid me speak;  
 See, and then speak yourselves. [*Exeunt Macb. and Len.*]

Awake, awake! 55

Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason!  
 Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!  
 Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,  
 And look on death itself! up, up, and see  
 The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo! 60  
 As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,  
 To countenance this horror! Ring the bell.

[*Alarum-bell rings.*]

*Re-enter Lady MACBETH.*

*Lady Macbeth.* What's the business,  
 That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley  
 The sleepers of the house? speak, speak!

*Macduff.* O gentle lady, 65

'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:  
 The repetition, in a woman's ear,  
 Would murder as it fell.

*Enter BANQUO.*

O Banquo, Banquo,  
 Our royal master's murder'd!

*Lady Macbeth.*

Woe, alas!

What, in our house?

*Banquo.* Too cruel any where. 70

Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,  
And say it is not so.

*Re-enter MACBETH and LENNOX.*

*Macbeth.* Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant,  
There's nothing serious in mortality: 75  
~~All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;~~  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.

*Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN.*

*Donalbain.* What is amiss?

*Macbeth.* You are, and do not know't:  
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood 80  
Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd.

*Macduff.* Your royal father's murder'd.

*Malcolm.* O, by whom?

*Lennox.* Those of his chamber, as it seem'd, had done't:  
Their hands and faces were all badg'd with blood; 85  
So were their daggers, which unwiped we found  
Upon their pillows:

They stared, and were distracted; no man's life  
Was to be trusted with them.

*Macbeth.* O, yet I do repent me of my fury,  
That I did kill them.

*Macduff.* Wherefore did you so? 90

*Macbeth.* Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and  
furious,

Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:  
The expedition of my violent love

Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,  
His silver skin laced with his golden blood; 95  
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature  
For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,  
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers  
Unmannerly breech'd with gore: who could refrain,  
That had a heart to love, and in that heart 100  
Courage to make's love known?

*Lady Macbeth.* Help me hence, ho!

*Macduff.* Look to the lady.

*Malcolm.* [*Aside to Don.*] Why do we hold our tongues,  
That most may claim this argument for ours?

*Donalbain.* [*Aside to Malcolm*] What should be spoken  
here, where our fate,  
Hid in an auger-hole, may rush, and seize us? 105  
Let's away;

Our tears are not yet brew'd.

*Malcolm.* [*Aside to Don.*] Nor our strong sorrow  
Upon the foot of motion.

*Banquo.* Look to the lady:

[*Lady Macbeth is carried out.*]

And when we have our naked frailties hid,  
That suffer in exposure, let us meet, 110  
And question this most bloody piece of work,  
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us:  
In the great hand of God I stand, and thence  
Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight  
Of treasonous malice.

*Macduff.* And so do I.

*All.* So all. 115

*Macbeth.* Let's briefly put on manly readiness,

And meet i' the hall together.

*All.*

Well contented.

[*Exeunt all except Malcolm and Donalbain.*]

*Mal.* What will you do? Let's not consort with them:  
To show an unfelt sorrow is an office  
Which the false man does easy. I'll to England. 120

*Donalbain.* To Ireland I; our separated fortune  
Shall keep us both the safer: where we are,  
There's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood,  
The nearer bloody.

*Malcolm.* This murderous shaft that's shot  
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way 125  
Is to avoid the aim. Therefore, to horse;  
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,  
But shift away: there's warrant in that theft  
Which steals itself, when there's no mercy left. [*Exeunt.*]

#### SCENE IV. *Outside MACBETH'S castle.*

*Enter Ross and an Old Man.*

*Old Man.* Threescore and ten I can remember well:  
Within the volume of which time I have seen  
Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night  
Hath trifled former knowings.

*Ross.* Ah, good father,  
Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,  
Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock 'tis day,  
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp: *light*<sup>5.</sup>  
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,  
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,

When living light should kiss it?

*Old Man.* 'Tis unnatural, 10

*Even like the deed that's done.* On Tuesday last,

A falcon, towering in her pride of place,

Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

*Ross.* And Duncan's horses—a thing most strange and certain—

Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race, 15

Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,

Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make

War with mankind.

*Old Man.* 'Tis said they eat each other.

*Ross.* They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes,  
That look'd upon't. Here comes the good Macduff: 20

*Enter MACDUFF.*

How goes the world, sir, now?

*Macduff.* Why, see you not?

*Ross.* Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?

*Macduff.* Those that Macbeth hath slain.

*Ross.* Alas, the day!

What good could they pretend?

*Macduff.* They were suborn'd: 25

Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's two sons,

Are stol'n away and fled; which puts upon them

Suspicion of the deed.

*Ross.* 'Gainst nature still:

Thriftless ambition, that wilt ravin up

Thine own life's means! Then 'tis most like

The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth. 30

*Macduff.* He is already named, and gone to Scone  
To be invested.



*Ross.* Where is Duncan's body?

*Macduff.* Carried to Colme-kill,  
The sacred storehouse of his predecessors,  
And guardian of their bones.

*Ross.* Will you to Scone? 35

*Macduff.* No, cousin, I'll to Fife.

*Ross.* Well, I will thither.

*Macd.* Well, may you see things well done there: adieu! || R.

Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

*Ross.* Farewell, father.

*Old Man.* God's benison go with you, and with those  
That would make good of bad, and friends of foes! 41 || R.

[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT III.

450 ll.

SCENE I. *Forres. The palace.**Enter BANQUO.*

*Banquo.* Thou hast it now : king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
 As the weird women promised, and, I fear,  
Thou play'dst most foully for't : yet it was said  
 It should not stand in thy posterity,  
 But that myself should be the root and father 5  
 Of many kings. If there come truth from them—  
 As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—  
 Why, by the verities on thee made good,  
 May they not be my oracles as well,  
 And set me up in hope? But hush ; no more. 10

*Sennet sounded. Enter MACBETH, as king ; Lady MACBETH, as queen ; LENNOX, ROSS, Lords, Ladies, and Attendants.*

*Macbeth.* Here's our chief guest.

*Lady Macbeth.* If he had been forgotten,

It had been as a gap in our great feast,  
 And all-thing unbecoming.

*Macbeth.* To-night we hold a solemn supper, sir,  
 And I'll request your presence.

*Banquo.* Let your highness 15  
 Command upon me ; to the which my duties  
 Are with a most indissoluble tie  
 For ever knit.

*Macbeth.* Ride you this afternoon?

*Banquo.* Ay, my good lord. 20

*Macbeth.* We should have else desired your good advice,  
Which still hath been both grave and prosperous,  
In this day's council; but we'll take to-morrow.  
// Is't far you ride?

*Banquo.* As far, my lord, as will fill up the time ' 25  
'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,  
I must become a borrower of the night  
For a dark hour or twain.

*Macbeth.* Fail not our feast.

*Banquo.* My lord, I will not.

*Macbeth.* We hear, our bloody cousins are bestow'd 30  
In England and in Ireland, not confessing  
Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers  
With strange invention: but of that to-morrow,  
When therewithal we shall have cause of state  
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse: adieu, 35  
Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

*Banquo.* Ay, my good lord: our time does call upon's.

*Macbeth.* I wish your horses swift and sure of foot;  
And so I do commend you to their backs.  
Farewell. [Exit Banquo. 40

Let every man be master of his time,  
Till seven at night; to make society  
The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself  
Till supper-time alone: while then, God be with you!

[Exeunt all except Macbeth and an Attendant.

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those men 45  
Our pleasure?

*Attendant.* They are, my lord, without the palace-gate.

*Macbeth.* Bring them before us. [Exit Attendant.

To be thus is nothing;

But to be safely thus.—Our fears in Banquo  
 Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature 50  
 Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares:  
 And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
 He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
 To act in safety. There is none but he  
 Whose being I do fear: and under him 55  
My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,  
 Mark Antony's was by Cæsar. He chid the sisters,  
 When first they put the name of king upon me,  
 And bade them speak to him; then prophet-like  
 They hail'd him father to a line of kings: 60  
 Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,  
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
 Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
 No son of mine succeeding. If't be so,  
 For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind; 65  
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
 Only for them, and mine eternal jewel  
 Given to the common enemy of man,  
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings! 70  
 Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,  
 And champion me to the utterance! Who's there?

*Re-enter Attendant, with two Murderers.*

Now go to the door, and stay there till we call.

[*Exit Attendant.*]

Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

*First Mur.* It was, so please your highness.

*Macbeth.*

Well then, now 75

Have you consider'd of my speeches? Know

That it was he in the times past which held you  
 So under fortune; which you thought had been  
 Our innocent self: this I made good to you  
 In our last conference, pass'd in probation with you, 80  
 How you were borne in hand, how cross'd, the instruments,  
 Who wrought with them, and all things else that might  
 To half a soul and to a notion crazed  
 Say "Thus did Banquo."

*First Murderer.* You made it known to us.

*Macbeth.* I did so; and went further, which is now 85  
 Our point of second meeting. Do you find  
 Your patience so predominant in your nature,  
 That you can let this go? Are you so gossell'd  
 To pray for this good man and for his issue,  
 Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave, 90  
 And beggar'd yours for ever?

*First Murderer.* We are men, my liege. <sup>human</sup> <sup>wiel haue</sup> <sup>reuer</sup>

*Macbeth.* Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men; <sup>of dogs</sup> <sup>man</sup>  
 As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
 Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves are clept <sup>called</sup>  
 All by the name of dogs: the valued file 95  
 Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,  
 The housekeeper, the hunter, every one  
 According to the gift which bounteous nature  
 Hath in him closed, whereby he does receive  
 Particular addition, from the bill

That writes them all alike: and so of men.  
 Now, if you have a station in the file,  
 Not i' the worst rank of manhood, say't;  
 And I will put that business in your bosoms,  
 Whose execution takes your enemy off, 100  
 Grapples you to the heart and love of us,  
 Who wear our health but sickly in his life,

Which in his death were perfect.

*Second Murderer.* I am one, my liege,  
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world  
Have so incens'd that I am reckless what  
I do to spite the world. 110

*First Murderer.* And I another  
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,  
That I would set my life on any chance,  
To mend it or be rid on't.

*Macbeth.* Both of you  
Know Banquo was your enemy.

*Both Murderers.* True, my lord. 115

*Macbeth.* So is he mine, and in such bloody distance  
That every minute of his being thrusts  
Against my near'st of life: and though I could  
With barefaced power sweep him from my sight,  
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,  
For certain friends that are both his and mine,  
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall  
Who I myself struck down: and thence it is  
That I to your assistance do make love,  
Masking the business from the common eye 125  
For sundry weighty reasons.

*Second Murderer.* We shall, my lord,  
Perform what you command us.

*First Murderer.* Though our lives—

*Macbeth.* Your spirits shine through you. Within this  
hour at most,

I will advise you where to plant yourselves,  
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time, 130  
The moment on't; for't must be done to-night,  
And something from the palace; always thought  
That I require a clearness: and with him—

To leave no rubs nor botches in the work—  
 Fleance his son, that keeps him company,  
 Whose absence is no less material to me  
 Than is his father's, must embrace the fate  
 Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:  
 I'll come to you anon.

135

*Both Murderers.* We are resolved, my lord.

*Macbeth.* I'll call upon you straight: abide within. 140

[*Exeunt Murderers.*

It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight,  
 If it find heaven, must find it out to-night. \ R. [Exit.

## SCENE II. *The palace.*

*Enter Lady MACBETH and a Servant.*

*Lady Macbeth.* Is Banquo gone from court?

*Servant.* Ay, madam, but returns again to-night.

*Lady Macbeth.* Say to the king, I would attend his leisure  
 For a few words.

*Servant.* Madam, I will. [Exit.

*Lady Macbeth.* Naught's had, all's spent,

Where our desire is got without content: 5

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,

Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

*Enter MACBETH.*

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,

Of sorriest fancies your companions making;

Using those thoughts which should indeed have died 10

With them they think on? Things without all remedy

Should be without regard: what's done is done.

*Macbeth.* We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it:  
She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice  
Remains in danger of her former tooth. 15

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,  
Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep

In the affliction of these terrible dreams

That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,

Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace, 20

Than on the torture of the mind to lie

In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;

Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,

Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing, 25

Can touch him further.

*Lady Macbeth.* Come on;

Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;

Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

*Macbeth.* So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you:

Let your remembrance apply to Banquo; 30

Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:

Unsafe the while that we

Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,

And make our faces vizards to our hearts,

Disguising what they are.

*Lady Macbeth.* You must leave this. 35

*Macbeth.* O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!  
Thou know'st that Banquo and his Fleance live.

*Lady Macbeth.* But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

*Macbeth.* There's comfort yet; they are assailable; 40  
Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown

His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons

The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums



Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.

*Lady Macbeth.* What's to be done?

*Macbeth.* Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, 45  
'Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,  
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;  
And with thy bloody and invisible hand  
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond  
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the crow 50  
Makes wing to the rooky wood:  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,  
Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse, *key into ?*  
Thou marvell'st at my words: but hold thee still; *acem*  
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill: 55  
So, prithee, go with me. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III. *A park near the palace.*

*Enter three Murderers.*

*First Mur.* But who did bid thee join with us?

*Third Murderer.*

*Macbeth.*

*Sec. Mur.* He needs not our mistrust; since he delivers  
Our offices, and what we have to do,  
To the direction just.

*First Murderer.* Then stand with us.

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day: 5  
Now spurs the lated traveller apace  
To gain the timely inn; and near approaches

The subject of our watch.

*Third Murderer.* Hark! I hear horses.

*Ban.* [*Within*] Give us a light there, ho!

*Second Murderer.* Then 'tis he: the rest

That are within the note of expectation 10

Already are i' the court.

*First Murderer.* His horses go about.

*Third Murderer.* Almost a mile: but he does usually,

So all men do, from hence to the palace-gate

Make it their walk.

*Second Murderer.* A light, a light!

*Third Murderer.* 'Tis he.

*First Murderer.* Stand to't. 15

*Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch.*

*Banquo.* It will be rain to-night.

*First Murderer.* Let it come down.

[*They assault Banquo.*

*Banquo.* O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!

Thou mayst revenge. O slave! [*Dies. Fleance escapes.*

*Third Mur.* Who did strike out the light?

*First Murderer.* Was't not the way?

*Third Mur.* There's but one down; the son is fled.

*Second Murderer.* We have lost 20

Best half of our affair.

*First Mur.* Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. *The same. Hall in the palace.*

*A banquet prepared. Enter* MACBETH, Lady MACBETH,  
ROSS, LENNOX, Lords, *and* Attendants.

*Macbeth.* You know your own degrees, sit down : at first  
And last the hearty welcome.

*Lords.* Thanks to your majesty.

*Macbeth.* Ourself will mingle with society,  
And play the humble host.  
Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time 5  
We will require her welcome.

*Lady Macb.* Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends :  
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

*Macb.* See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.  
Both sides are even : here I'll sit i' the midst : 10

*Enter first Murderer to the door.*

Be large in mirth ; anon we'll drink a measure  
The table round. [*Approaching the door.*] There's blood  
upon thy face.

*Murderer.* 'Tis Banquo's then.

*Macbeth.* 'Tis better thee without than he within.  
Is he dispatch'd? 15

*Murderer.* My lord, his throat is cut ; that I did for him.

*Macb.* Thou art the best o' the cut-throats : yet he's good  
That did the like for Fleance : if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

*Murderer.* Most royal sir,  
Fleance is scaped. 20

*Macb.* Then comes my fit again : I had else been perfect ;

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
 As broad and general as the casing air:  
 But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
 To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe? 25

*Murderer.* Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,  
 With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  
 The least a death to nature.

*Macbeth.* Thanks for that:  
 There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled  
 Hath nature that in time will venom breed, 30  
 No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow  
 We'll hear, ourselves, again. [*Exit Murderer.*]

*Lady Macbeth.* My royal lord,  
 You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold  
 That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a-making,  
 'Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home; 35  
 From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;  
 Meeting were bare without it.

*Macbeth.* Sweet remembrancer!  
 Now, good digestion wait on appetite,  
 And health on both!

*Lennox.* May't please your highness sit.  
 [*The Ghost of Banquo enters, and sits in  
 Macbeth's place.*]

*Macb.* Here had we now our country's honour roof'd, 40  
 Were the graced person of our Banquo present;  
 Who may I rather challenge for unkindness  
 Than pity for mischance!

*Ross.* His absence, sir,  
 Lays blame upon his promise. Please't your highness  
 To grace us with your royal company. 45

*Macbeth.* The table's full.

*Lennox.* Here is a place reserv'd, sir.

*Macbeth.* Where?

*Lennox.* Here, my good lord. What is't that moves  
your highness?

*Macbeth.* Which of you have done this?

*Lords.* What, my good lord?

*Macbeth.* Thou canst not say I did it: never shake so  
Thy gory locks at me.

*Ross.* Gentlemen, rise; his highness is not well.

*Lady Macbeth.* Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought 55  
He will again be well: if much you note him,  
You shall offend him, and extend his passion:  
Feed, and regard him not. Are you a man?

*Macbeth.* Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appal the devil.

*Lady Macbeth.* O proper stuff! 60  
This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,  
Impostors to true fear, would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire, 65  
Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

*Macbeth.* Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo! how  
say you?

Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too. 70  
If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites. [Ghost disappears.

*Lady Macbeth.* What, quite unmann'd in folly?

*Macbeth.* If I stand here, I saw him.

*Lady Macbeth.*

Fie, for shame!

*Macbeth.* Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden  
time,

Ere humane statute purged the gentle weal;

Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd

Too terrible for the ear: the time has been,

That, when the brains were out, the man would die,

And there an end; but now they rise again,

With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,

And push us from our stools: this is more strange

Than such a murder is.

*Lady Macbeth.*

My worthy lord,

Your noble friends do lack you.

*Macbeth.*

I do forget:

Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends;

I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing

To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;

Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine, fill full.

I drink to the general joy o' the whole table,

And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;

Would he were here! to all, and him, we thirst,

And all to all.

*Lords.*

Our duties, and the pledge.

*Re-enter Ghost.*

*Macbeth.* Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth  
hide thee!

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;

Thou hast no speculation in those eyes

Which thou dost glare with!

*Lady Macbeth.*

Think of this, good peers,

But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;

Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

*Macbeth.* What man dare, I dare:

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear, 100

The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves

Shall never tremble: or be alive again,

And dare me to the desert with thy sword;

If trembling I inhabit then, protest me 105

The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!

Unreal mockery, hence! [*Ghost disappears.*]

Why, so; being gone,

I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

*Lady Macbeth.* You have displaced the mirth, broke  
the good meeting,

With most admired disorder. *at once*

*Macbeth.* Can such things be, 110

And overcome us like a summer's cloud,

Without our special wonder? You make me strange

Even to the disposition that I owe,

When now I think you can behold such sights,

And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks, 115

When mine is blanch'd with fear.

*Ross.* What sights, my lord?

*Lady Macbeth.* I pray you, speak not; he grows worse  
and worse;

Question enrages him: at once, good night:

Stand not upon the order of your going,

But go at once.

*Lennox.* Good night; and better health 120

Attend his majesty!

*Lady Macbeth.* A kind good night to all!

[*Exeunt all except Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.*]

*Mac.* It will have blood; they say blood will have blood:

Stones have been known to move and trees to speak :  
 Augures and understood relations have  
 By magot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth 125  
 The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

*Lady Macbeth.* Almost at odds with morning, which is  
 which.

*Macb.* How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
 At our great bidding?

*Lady Macbeth.* Did you send to him, sir?

*Macbeth.* I hear it by the way; but I will send: 130  
 There's not a one of them but in his house  
 I keep a servant fee'd. I will to-morrow—  
 And betimes I will—to the weird sisters:

More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,  
 By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good, 135  
 All causes shall give way: I am in blood  
 Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
 Returning were as tedious as go o'er:

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;  
 Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd. 140

*Lady Macbeth.* You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

*Macb.* Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse  
 Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:

We are yet but young in deed. [Exeunt.

### SCENE V. *A heath.*

*Thunder.* Enter the three Witches, meeting HECATE.

*First Witch.* Why, how now, Hecate! you look angerly.

*Hecate.* Have I not reason, beldams as you are,  
 Saucy and overbold? How did you dare  
 To trade and traffic with Macbeth  
 In riddles and affairs of death;



And I, the mistress of your charms,  
 The close contriver of all harms,  
 Was never call'd to bear my part,  
 Or show the glory of our art?  
 And, which is worse, all you have done 10  
 Hath been but for a wayward son,  
 Spiteful and wrathful; who, as others do,  
 Loves for his own ends, not for you.  
 But make amends now: get you gone,  
 And at the pit of Acheron 15  
 Meet me i' the morning: thither he  
 Will come to know his destiny:  
 Your vessels and your spells provide,  
 Your charms and every thing beside.  
 I am for the air; this night I'll spend 20  
 Unto a dismal and a fatal end:  
 Great business must be wrought ere noon:  
 Upon the corner of the moon  
 There hangs a vaporous drop profound;  
 I'll catch it ere it come to ground: 25  
 And that, distill'd by magic sleights,  
 Shall raise such artificial sprites  
 As by the strength of their illusion  
 Shall draw him on to his confusion:  
 He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear 30  
 His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear:  
 And you all know security  
 Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

*[Music and a song within, "Come away, come away," &c.*  
 Hark! I am call'd; my little spirit, see, 34  
 Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me. *[Exit.*

*First Witch.* Come, let's make haste; she'll soon be  
 back again. *[Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *Forres. The palace.**Enter LENNOX and another Lord.*

*Lennox.* My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,  
 Which can interpret further: only, I say,  
 Things have been strangely borne. The gracious Duncan  
 Was pitied of Macbeth: marry, he was dead:  
 And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late; 5  
 Whom, you may say, if't please you, Fleance kill'd,  
 For Fleance fled: men must not walk too late.  
 Who cannot want the thought, how monstrous  
 It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain  
 To kill their gracious father? damned fact! 10  
 How it did grieve Macbeth! did he not straight  
 In pious rage the two delinquents tear,  
 That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?  
 Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;  
 For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive 15  
 To hear the men deny't. So that, I say,  
 He has borne all things well: and I do think  
 That, had he Duncan's sons under his key—  
 As, an't please heaven, he shall not—they should find  
 What 'twere to kill a father; so should Fleance. 20  
 But, peace! for from broad words, and 'cause he fail'd  
 His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear  
 Macduff lives in disgrace: sir, can you tell  
 Where he bestows himself?

*Lord.*

The son of Duncan,  
 From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth, 25  
 Lives in the English court, and is received  
 Of the most pious Edward with such grace

That the malevolence of fortune nothing  
 Takes from his high respect: thither Macduff  
 Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid 30  
 To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward:  
 That, by the help of these—with Him above  
 To ratify the work—we may again  
 Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,  
 Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives, 35  
 Do faithful homage, and receive free honours;  
 All which we pine for now: and this report  
 Hath so exasperate the king that he  
 Prepares for some attempt of war.

*Lennox.* Sent he to Macduff?

*Lord.* He did: and with an absolute "Sir, not I," 40  
 The cloudy messenger turns me his back,  
 And hums, as who should say, "You'll rue the time  
 That clogs me with this answer."

*Lennox.* And that well might  
 Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance  
 His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel 45  
 Fly to the court of England and unfold  
 His message ere he come; that a swift blessing  
 May soon return to this our suffering country  
 Under a hand accursed!

*Lord.* I'll send my prayers with him.

[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT IV.

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SCENE I. *A cavern. In the middle, a boiling caldron.*

*Thunder. Enter the three Witches.*

*First Witch.* Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

*Second Witch.* Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

*Third Witch.* Harpier cries "'tis time, 'tis time."

*First Witch.* Round about the caldron go ;  
In the poison'd entrails throw. 5

Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights hast thirty-one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

*All.* Double, double toil and trouble ; 10  
Fire burn and caldron bubble.

*Second Witch.* Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the caldron boil and bake ;  
Eye of newt and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat and tongue of dog, 15  
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

*All.* Double, double toil and trouble ; 20  
Fire burn and caldron bubble.

*Third Witch.* Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf  
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,

Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark, 25

Liver of blaspheming Jew,

Gall of goat, and slips of yew

Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,

Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips,

Finger of birth-strangled babe 30

Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,

Make the gruel thick and slab :

Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,

For the ingredients of our caldron.

*All.* Double, double toil and trouble ; 35

Fire burn and caldron bubble.

*Second Witch.* Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
Then the charm is firm and good.

*Enter* HECATE.

*Hecate.* O, well done ! I commend your pains :

And every one shall share i' the gains : 40

And now about the caldron sing,

- Like elves and fairies in a ring,

Enchanting all that you put in.

[*Music and song, "Black spirits," &c.*

[*Hecate retires.*

*Second Witch.* By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes : 45

Open, locks,

Whoever knocks !

*Enter* MACBETH.

*Macb.* How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags !  
What is't you do ?

*All.* A deed without a name.

*Macbeth.* I conjure you, by that which you profess, 50

Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:  
 Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
 Against the churches; though the yesty waves  
 Confound and swallow navigation up;  
 Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down; 55  
 Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
 Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
 Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure  
 Of nature's germens tumble all together,  
 Even till destruction sicken; answer me 60  
 To what I ask you.

*First Witch.* Speak.

*Second Witch.* Demand.

*Third Witch.* We'll answer.

*First Witch.* Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our  
 mouths,

Or from our masters?

*Macbeth.* Call 'em, let me see 'em.

*First Witch.* Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten  
 Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten 65  
 From the murderer's gibbet throw  
 Into the flame.

*All.* Come, high or low;  
 Thyself and office deftly show!

*Thunder.* *First Apparition:* *an armed Head.*

*Macb.* Tell me, thou unknown power,—

*First Witch.* He knows thy thought:  
 Hear his speech, but say thou naught. 70

*First Apparition.* Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware  
 Macduff:

Beware the thane of Fife. Dismiss me: enough.

[*Descends.*]

*Macb.* Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks;  
Thou hast harp'd my fear aright: but one word more,—

*First Witch.* He will not be commanded: here's another,  
More potent than the first. 76

*Thunder.* *Second Apparition: a bloody Child.*

*Second Apparition.* Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

*Macbeth.* Had I three ears, I'd hear thee. \

*Second Apparition.* Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh  
to scorn

The power of man, for none of woman born *Rhyme* 80  
Shall harm Macbeth. [Descends.

*Macbeth.* Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?  
But yet I'll make assurance double sure,  
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;  
(That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies, 85  
And sleep in spite of thunder.

*Thunder.* *Third Apparition: a Child crowned, with a  
tree in his hand.*

What is this,  
That rises like the issue of a king,  
And wears upon his baby-brow the round  
And top of sovereignty?

*All.* Listen, but speak not to't.

*Third Apparition.* Be lion-mettled, proud; and take  
no care 90

Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:  
Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him. [Descends.

*Macbeth.* That will never be:

Who can impress the forest, bid the tree 95  
 Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements! good!  
 Rebellion's head, rise never till the wood  
 Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth  
 Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath  
 To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart 100  
 Throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art  
 Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever  
 Reign in this kingdom?

*All.* Seek to know no more.

*Macbeth.* I will be satisfied: (deny me this,  
And an eternal curse fall on you!) Let me know. 105  
 Why sinks that caldron? and what noise is this? [*Hautboys.*

*First Witch.* Show!

*Second Witch.* Show!

*Third Witch.* Show!

*All.* Show his eyes, and grieve his heart; 110  
 Come like shadows, so depart!

*A show of Eight Kings, the last with a glass in his hand;*  
*BANQUO'S Ghost following.*

*Macbeth.* Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo; down!  
 Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs: and thy hair,  
 Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first:  
 A third is like the former. Filthy hags! 115  
 Why do you show me this? A fourth? Start, eyes!  
 —What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?  
 Another yet? A seventh? I'll see no more:  
 And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass  
 Which shows me many more; and some I see 120  
 That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry:  
 Horrible sight! Now I see 'tis true; —



For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,  
And points at them for his. What, is this so?

*First Witch.* Ay, sir, all this is so: but why  
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly? 125

Come, sisters, cheer we up his spirits,  
And show the best of our delights:

I'll charm the air to give a sound,  
While you perform your antic round; 130

That this great king may kindly say  
Our duties did his welcome pay.

[*Music. The Witches dance, and then vanish, with Hecate.*

*Macb.* Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour  
Stand aye accursed in the calendar!  
Come in, without there!

*Enter LENNOX.*

*Lennox.* What's your grace's will? 135

*Macbeth.* Saw you the weird sisters?

*Lennox.* No, my lord.

*Macbeth.* Came they not by you?

*Lennox.* No, indeed, my lord.

*Macbeth.* Infected be the air whereon they ride,  
And damn'd all those that trust them! I did hear  
The galloping of horse: who was't came by? 140

*Lennox.* 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word  
Macduff is fled to England.

*Macbeth.* Fled to England!

*Lennox.* Ay, my good lord.

*Macbeth.* Time, thou anticipatest my dread exploits:  
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook 145  
Unless the deed go with it: from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be

The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
 To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done :  
 The castle of Macduff I will surprise ; 150  
 Seize upon Fife ; give to the edge o' the sword  
 His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
 That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool ;  
 This deed I'll do before this purpose cool ;  
 But no more sights !—Where are these gentlemen ? 155  
 Come, bring me where they are. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II. *Fife.* MACDUFF'S castle.

*Enter Lady MACDUFF, her Son, and ROSS.*

*Lady Macd.* What had he done, to make him fly the land ?

*Ross.* You must have patience, madam.

*Lady Macduff.* He had none :

His flight was madness : when our actions do not,  
 Our fears do make us traitors.

*Ross.* You know not

Whether it was his wisdom or his fear. 5

*Lady Macduff.* Wisdom ! to leave his wife, to leave his  
 babes,

His mansion and his titles in a place  
 From whence himself does fly ? He loves us not ;  
 He wants the natural touch : for the poor wren,  
 The most diminutive of birds, will fight, 10  
 Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.  
 All is the fear, and nothing is the love ;  
 As little is the wisdom, where the flight  
 So runs against all reason.

*Ross.* My dearest coz,

I pray you, school yourself : but for your husband, 15

He's noble, wise, judicious, and best knows  
 The fits o' the season. I dare not speak much further:  
 But cruel are the times, when we are traitors,  
 And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumour  
 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear, 20  
 But float upon a wild and violent sea  
 Each way and move. I take my leave of you:  
 Shall not be long but I'll be here again:  
 Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward  
 To what they were before. My pretty cousin, 25  
 Blessing upon you!

*Lady Macduff.* Father'd he is, and yet he's fatherless.

*Ross.* I am so much a fool, should I stay longer,  
 It would be my disgrace and your discomfort:

I take my leave at once. [*Exit.*

*Lady Macduff.* Sirrah, your father's dead: 30

And what will you do now? How will you live?

*Son.* As birds do, mother.

*Lady Macduff.* What, with worms and flies?

*Son.* With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

*Lady Macduff.* Poor bird! thou'ldst never fear the net  
 nor lime,

The pitfall nor the gin. 35

*Son.* Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not  
 set for.

My father is not dead, for all your saying.

*Lady Macduff.* Yes, he is dead: how wilt thou do for  
 a father?

*Son.* Nay, how will you do for a husband?

*Lady Macd.* Why, I can buy me twenty at any market. 40

*Son.* Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

*Lady Macduff.* Thou speak'st with all thy wit, and yet,  
 i' faith,

With wit enough for thee.

*Son.* Was my father a traitor, mother?

*Lady Macduff.* Ay, that he was. 45

*Son.* What is a traitor?

*Lady Macduff.* Why, one that swears and lies.

*Son.* And be all traitors that do so?

*Lady Macduff.* Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged. 50

*Son.* And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

*Lady Macduff.* Every one.

*Son.* Who must hang them?

*Lady Macduff.* Why, the honest men.

*Son.* Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men, and hang up them. 57

*Lady Macduff.* Now, God help thee, poor monkey! But how wilt thou do for a father?

*Son.* If he were dead, you'd weep for him: if you would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.

*Lady Macduff.* Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

*Enter a Messenger.*

*Messenger.* Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known, Though in your state of honour I am perfect. 65

I doubt some danger does approach you nearly:

If you will take a homely man's advice,

Be not found here; hence, with your little ones.

To fright you thus, methinks, I am too savage;

To do worse to you were fell cruelty, 70

Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!

I dare abide no longer. [Exit.

*Lady Macduff.* Whither should I fly?

I have done no harm. But I remember now  
 I am in this earthly world; where to do harm  
 Is often laudable, to do good sometime  
 Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas,  
 Do I put up that womanly defence,  
 To say I have done no harm?

75

*Enter Murderers.*

What are these faces?

*First Murderer.* Where is your husband?

*Lady Macduff.* I hope, in no place so unsanctified so  
 Where such as thou mayst find him.

*First Murderer.* He's a traitor.

*Son.* Thou liest, thou shag-ear'd villain!

*First Murderer.* What, you egg!  
 [*Stabbing him.*]

Young fry of treachery!

*Son.* He has kill'd me, mother:

Run away, I pray you! [*Dies.*]

[*Exit Lady Macduff, crying "Murder!" and  
 pursued by the Murderers.*]

SCENE III. *England. Before the King's palace.*

*Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF.*

*Malcolm.* Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there  
 Weep our sad bosoms empty.

*Macduff.* Let us rather

Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men  
 Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom: each new morn  
 New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows

5

Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds  
 As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out  
 Like syllable of dolour.

*Malcolm.* What I believe, I'll wail;  
 What know, believe; and what I can redress,  
 As I shall find the time to, friend, I will. 10

What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.  
 This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,  
 Was once thought honest: you have loved him well;  
 He hath not touch'd you yet. I am young; but something  
 You may deserve of him through me, and wisdom 15  
 To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb  
 To appease an angry god.

*Macduff.* I am not treacherous.

*Malcolm.* But Macbeth is.

A good and virtuous nature may recoil  
 In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon; 20  
 That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose:  
 Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell:  
 Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,  
 Yet grace must still look so.

*Macduff.* I have lost my hopes.

*Mal.* Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.  
 Why in that rawness left you wife and child, 26  
 Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,  
 Without leave-taking? I pray you,  
 Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,  
 But mine own safeties: you may be rightly just, 30  
 Whatever I shall think.

*Macduff.* Bleed, bleed, poor country!  
 Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,  
 For goodness dare not check thee! wear thou thy wrongs,  
 The title is affeer'd! Fare thee well, lord:

I would not be the villain that thou think'st . . . 35  
 For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,  
 And the rich East to boot.

*Malcolm.* Be not offended:

I speak not as in absolute fear of you.

I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;

It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash 40

Is added to her wounds: I think, withal,

There would be hands uplifted in my right;

And here from gracious England have I offer

Of goodly thousands: but, for all this,

When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head, 45

Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country

Shall have more vices than it had before,

More suffer and more sundry ways than ever,

By him that shall succeed.

*Macduff.* What should he be?

*Malcolm.* It is myself I mean: in whom I know 50

All the particulars of vice so grafted

That, when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth

Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state

Esteem him as a lamb, being compared

With my confineless harms.

*Macduff.* Not in the legions 55

Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd

In evils to top Macbeth.

*Malcolm.* I grant him bloody,

Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,

Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin

That has a name: but there's no bottom, none, 60

In my voluptuousness: and my desire

All continent impediments would o'erbear,

That did oppose my will: better Macbeth  
Than such a one to reign.

*Macduff.* Boundless intemperance  
In nature is a tyranny; it hath been 65  
The untimely emptying of the happy throne,  
And fall of many-kings. But fear not yet  
To take upon you what is yours: you may  
Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty,  
And yet seem cold, the time you may so hoodwink. 70

*Malcolm.* With this, there grows  
In my most ill-composed affection such  
A stanchless avarice that, were I king,  
I should cut off the nobles for their lands;  
Desire his jewels and this other's house: 75  
And my more-having would be as a sauce  
To make me hunger more; that I should forge  
Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,  
Destroying them for wealth.

*Macduff.* This avarice  
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root 80  
Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been  
The sword of our slain kings: yet do not fear;  
Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will  
Of your mere own: all these are portable,  
With other graces weigh'd. 85

*Malcolm.* But I have none: the king-becoming graces,  
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,  
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,  
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,  
I have no relish of them; but abound 90  
In the division of each several crime,  
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should



Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,

Uproar the universal peace, confound

All unity on earth.

*Macduff.* O Scotland, Scotland! 95

*Malcolm.* If such a one be fit to govern, speak:  
I am as I have spoken.

*Macduff.* Fit to govern!

No, not to live. O nation miserable,

—With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,

When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again, 100

Since that the truest issue of thy throne

By his own interdiction stands accurs'd,

And does blaspheme his breed? Thy royal father

Was a most sainted king: the queen that bore thee,

Oftener upon her knees than on her feet, 105

Died every day she lived. Fare thee well!

These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself

Have banish'd me from Scotland. O my breast,

Thy hope ends here!

*Malcolm.* Macduff, this noble passion,

Child of integrity, hath from my soul 110

Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts

To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth

By many of these trains hath sought to win me

Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me

From over-credulous haste: but God above 115

Deal between thee and me! for even now

I put myself to thy direction, and

Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure

The taints and blames I laid upon myself,

For strangers to my nature. I am yet 120

Unknown to love, I never was forsworn,

Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,  
 At no time broke my faith, would not betray  
 The devil to his fellow, and delight  
 No less in truth than life: my first false speaking 125  
 Was this upon myself: what I am truly,  
 Is thine and my poor country's to command:  
 Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,  
 Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,  
 Already at a point, was setting forth. 130  
 Now we'll together; and the chance of goodness  
 Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?

*Macduff.* Such welcome and unwelcome things at once  
 'Tis hard to reconcile.

*Enter a Doctor.*

*Malcolm.* Well; more anon. Comes the king forth, I  
 pray you? 135

*Doctor.* Ay, sir; there are a crew of wretched souls  
 That stay his cure: their malady convinces  
 The great assay of art: but at his touch—  
 Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand— 139  
 They presently amend.

*Malcolm.* I thank you, doctor. [*Exit Doctor.*]

*Macd.* What's the disease he means?

*Malcolm.* 'Tis call'd the evil:  
 A most miraculous work in this good king;  
 Which often, since my here-remain in England,  
 I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,  
 Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people, 145  
 All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,  
 The mere despair of surgery, he cures;

Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,  
 Put on with holy prayers: and 'tis spoken,  
 To the succeeding royalty he leaves 150  
 The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,  
 He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,  
 And sundry blessings hang about his throne,  
 That speak him full of grace.

*Macduff.* See, who comes here? 154

*Malcolm.* My countryman; but yet I know him not.

*Enter Ross.*

*Macduff.* My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

*Malcolm.* I know him now: good God, betimes remove  
 The means that makes us strangers!

*Ross.* Sir, amen.

*Macduff.* Stands Scotland where it did?

*Ross.* Alas, poor country,  
 Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot 160  
 Be call'd our mother, but our grave: where nothing,  
 But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;  
 Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rent the air  
 Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems  
 A modern ecstasy: the dead man's knell 165  
 Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives  
 Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
 Dying or ere they sicken.

*Macduff.* O, relation

Too nice, and yet too true!

*Malcolm.* What's the newest grief? 169

*Ross.* That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker;  
 Each minute teems a new one.

*Macduff.* How does my wife?

*Ross.* Why, well.

*Macduff.* And all my children?

*Ross.* Well, too. 172

*Macduff.* The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?

*Ross.* No; they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.

*Macduff.* Be not a piggard of your speech: how goes't?

*Ross.* When I came hither to transport the tidings,  
Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour  
Of many worthy fellows that were out;  
Which was to my belief witness'd the rather,  
For that I saw the tyrant's power a-foot: 180  
Now is the time of help; your eye in Scotland  
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,  
To doff their dire distresses.

*Malcolm.* Be't their comfort  
We are coming thither: gracious England hath  
Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men; 185  
An older and a better soldier none  
That Christendom gives out.

*Ross.* Would I could answer  
This comfort with the like! But I have words  
That would be howl'd out in the desert air, 189  
Where hearing should not latch them.

*Macduff.* What concern they?  
The general cause? or is it a fee-grief  
Due to some single breast?

*Ross.* No mind that's honest  
But in it shares some woe; though the main part  
Pertains to you alone.

*Macduff.* If it be mine,  
Keep it not from me, quickly let me have it. 195

*Ross.* Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever,  
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound  
That ever yet they heard.

*Macduff.* Hum! I guess at it.

*Ross.* Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes  
Savagely slaughter'd; to relate the manner, 200  
Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer,  
To add the death of you. *following*

*Malcolm.* Merciful heaven!

What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;  
Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak  
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break. 205

*Macduff.* My children too?

*Ross.* Wife, children, servants, all  
That could be found.

*Macduff.* And I must be from thence!  
My wife kill'd too?

*Ross.* I have said.

*Malcolm.* Be comforted:

Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief. 210

*Macduff.* He has no children. All my pretty ones?  
Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?  
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam  
At one fell swoop?

*Malcolm.* Dispute it like a man.

*Macduff.* I shall do so; 215

But I must also feel it as a man:  
I cannot but remember such things were,  
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,  
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,  
They were all struck for thee! naught that I am, 220

Not for their own demerits, but for mine,  
Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

*Malcolm.* Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief  
Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it. 224

*Macduff.* O, I could play the woman with mine eyes,  
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him; if he scape,  
Heaven forgive him too!

*Malcolm.* This tune goes manly. 230

Come, go we to the king; our power is ready;  
Our lack is nothing but our leave: Macbeth  
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above  
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may:  
The night is long that never finds the day. 235

[*Exeunt.*]

359 ll.

## ACT V.

SCENE I. *Dunsinane. Ante-room in the castle.**Enter a Doctor of Physic and a Waiting-Gentlewoman.*

*Doctor.* I have two nights watched with you, but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she last walked? 3

*Gentlewoman.* Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep. 8

*Doctor.* A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching! In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say?

*Gentle.* That, sir, which I will not report after her.

*Doctor.* You may to me; and 'tis most meet you should. 16

*Gentlewoman.* Neither to you nor any one; having no witness to confirm my speech. Lo you, here she comes!

*Enter Lady MACBETH, with a taper.*

This is her very guise; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close. 20

*Doctor.* How came she by that light?

*Gentlewoman.* Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually; 'tis her command.

*Doctor.* You see, her eyes are open.

*Gentlewoman.* Ay, but their sense is shut. 25

*Doctor.* What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

*Gentlewoman.* It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour. 30

*Lady Macbeth.* Yet, here's a spot.

*Doctor.* Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

*Lady Macbeth.* Out, damned spot! out, I say!—One, two; why, then 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky!—Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?—Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

*Doctor.* Do you mark that? 40

*Lady Macbeth.* The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?—What, will these hands ne'er be clean?—No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

*Doctor.* Go to, go to; you have known what you should not. 46

*Gentlewoman.* She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.

*Lady Macbeth.* Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh! 51

*Doctor.* What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.



*Gentlewoman.* I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body. 55

*Doctor.* Well, well, well,—

*Gentlewoman.* Pray God it be, sir.

*Doctor.* This disease is beyond my practice: yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds. 60

*Lady Macbeth.* Wash your hands, put on your nightgown; look not so pale:—I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot come out on's grave.

*Doctor.* Even so? 64

*Lady Macbeth.* To bed, to bed; there's knocking at the gate: come, come, come, come, give me your hand: what's done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed.

[*Exit.*

*Doctor.* Will she go now to bed?

*Gentlewoman.* Directly.

*Doctor.* Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds 71  
 To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:  
 More needs she the divine than the physician.  
 God, God forgive us all! Look after her;  
 Remove from her the means of all annoyance, 75  
 And still keep eyes upon her: so, good night:  
 My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight:  
 I think, but dare not speak.

*Gentlewoman.* Good night, good doctor.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *The country near Dunsinane.*

*Enter, with drum and colours, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, and Soldiers.*

*Menteith.* The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,  
His uncle Siward and the good Macduff:  
Revenues burn in them; for their dear causes  
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm  
Excite the mortified man.

*Angus.* Near Birnam wood 5  
Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

*Caithness.* Who knows if Donalbain be with his brother?

*Lennox.* For certain, sir, he is not: I have a file  
Of all the gentry: there is Siward's son,  
And many unrough youths that even now 10  
Protest their first of manhood.

*Menteith.* What does the tyrant?

*Caithness.* Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies:  
Some say he's mad; others, that lesser hate him,  
Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,  
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause 15  
Within the belt of rule.

*Angus.* Now does he feel  
His secret murders sticking on his hands;  
Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;  
Those he commands move only in command,  
Nothing in love: now does he feel his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.

*Menteith.* Who then shall blame  
His pester'd senses to recoil and start,

*Handwritten:* may make 13-14  
keep

When all that is within him does condemn  
Itself for being there?

*Caithness.* Well, march we on, 25

To give obedience where 'tis truly owed:  
Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,  
And with him pour we in our country's purge  
Each drop of us.

*Lennox.* Or so much as it needs,  
To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds. 30  
Make we our march towards Birnam. [*Exeunt, marching.*]

SCENE III. *Dunsinane. A room in the castle.*

*Enter* MACBETH, Doctor, and Attendants.

*Macbeth.* Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:  
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,  
I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?  
Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know  
All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus, 5  
"Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman  
Shall e'er have power upon thee." Then fly, false thanes,  
And mingle with the English epicures:  
The mind I sway by and the heart I bear  
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear. 10

*Enter a Servant.*

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!  
Where gott'st thou that goose look?

*Serv.* There is ten thousand—

*Macbeth.* Geese, villain?

*Servant.* Soldiers, sir.

*Macbeth.* Go, prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,  
Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch? 15  
Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of thine  
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

*Servant.* The English force, so please you.

*Macbeth.* Take thy face hence. [Exit Servant.]

Seyton!—I am sick at heart,  
When I behold—Seyton, I say!—This push 20  
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.  
I have lived long enough: my way of life  
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;  
And that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, 25  
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.  
Seyton!

*Enter SEYTON.* *officer to Macbeth.*

*Seyton.* What is your gracious pleasure?

*Macbeth.* What news more?

*Seyton.* All is confirm'd, my lord, which was reported. 31

*Macbeth.* I'll fight, till from my bones my flesh be hack'd.  
Give me my armour.

*Seyton.* 'Tis not needed yet.

*Macbeth.* I'll put it on.

Send out moe horses, skirr the country round; 35  
Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour.  
How does your patient, doctor?

*Doctor.* Not so sick, my lord,  
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies  
That keep her from her rest.

*Macbeth.* Cure her of that:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, 40  
 Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
 Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
 And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
 Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
 Which weighs upon the heart?

*Doctor.* Therein the patient 45

Must minister to himself.

*Macbeth.* Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it.  
 Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff:  
 Seyton, send out. Doctor, the thanes fly from me.  
 Come, sir, dispatch. If thou couldst, doctor, find 50  
 My land's disease,  
 And purge it to a sound and pristine health,  
 I would applaud thee to the very echo,  
 That should applaud again.—Pull't off, I say.—  
 What rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug, 55  
 Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of them?

*Doctor.* Ay, my good lord; your royal preparation  
 Makes us hear something.

*Macbeth.* Bring it after me.

I will not be afraid of death and bane,  
 Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane. 60

[*Exeunt all except Doctor.*]

*Doctor.* Were I from Dunsinane away and clear,  
 Profit again should hardly draw me here. [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV. *Country near Dunsinane: a wood in view.*

*Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, old SIWARD and young SIWARD, MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSS, and Soldiers, marching.*

*Malcolm.* Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand  
That chambers will be safe.

*Menteith.* We doubt it nothing.

*Siward.* What wood is this before us?

*Menteith.* The wood of Birnam.

*Malcolm.* Let every soldier hew him down a bough  
And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow 5  
The numbers of our host and make discovery  
Err in report of us.

*Soldiers.* It shall be done.

*Siward.* We learn no other but the confident tyrant  
Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure  
Our setting down before't.

*Malcolm.* 'Tis his main hope: 10  
For where there is advantage to be given,  
Both more and less have given him the revolt;  
And none serve with him but constrained things,  
Whose hearts are absent too.

*Macduff.* Let our just censures  
Attend the true event, and put we on 15  
Industrious soldiership.

*Siward.* The time approaches  
That will with due decision make us know  
What we shall say we have, and what we owe.  
Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate,  
But certain issue strokes must arbitrate: 20  
Towards which advance the war. [*Exeunt, marching.*]

SCENE V. *Dunsinane. Within the castle.*

*Enter, with drum and colours, MACBETH, SEYTON, and Soldiers.*

*Macbeth.* Hang out our banners on the outward walls;  
The cry is still "They come": our castle's strength  
Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie  
Till famine and the ague eat them up:  
Were they not forced with those that should be ours, 5  
We might have met them darest, beard to beard,  
And beat them backward home. [*A cry of women within.*  
What is that noise?

*Seyton.* It is the cry of women, my good lord. [*Exit.*

*Macbeth.* I have almost forgot the taste of fears:  
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd 10  
To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
As life were in't: I have supp'd full with horrors;  
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
Cannot once start me.

*Re-enter SEYTON.*

Wherefore was that cry? 15

*Seyton.* The queen, my lord, is dead.

*Macbeth.* She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, 20  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, 25  
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

*Enter a Messenger.*

Thou comest to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

*Messenger.* Gracious my lord, 30  
 I should report that which I say I saw,  
 But know not how to do it.

*Macbeth.* Well, say, sir.

*Messenger.* As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
 I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,  
 The wood began to move.

*Macbeth.* Liar and slave! 35

*Messenger.* Let me endure your wrath, if't be not so:  
 Within this three mile may you see it coming;  
 I say, a moving grove.

*Macbeth.* If thou speak'st false,  
 Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,  
 Till famine cling thee: if thy speech be sooth, 40  
 I care not if thou dost for me as much.

I pull in resolution, and begin  
 To doubt the equivocation of the fiend,  
 That lies like truth: "Fear not, till Birnam wood  
 Do come to Dunsinane"; and now a wood 45

Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!

If this which he avouches does appear,  
 There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.

I gin to be a-weary of the sun,  
 And wish the estate o' the world were now undone. 50

Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! come, wrack!

At least we'll die with harness on our back. [*Exeunt.*]



SCENE VI. *Dunsinane. Before the castle.*

*Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, old SIWARD, MACDUFF, &c., and their Army, with boughs.*

*Mal.* Now near enough; your leavy screens throw down,  
And show like those you are. You, worthy uncle,  
Shall, with my cousin, your right-noble son,  
Lead our first battle: worthy Macduff and we  
Shall take upon's what else remains to do, 5  
According to our order.

*Siward.* Fare you well.  
Do we but find the tyrant's power to-night,  
Let us be beaten, if we cannot fight.

*Macduff.* Make all our trumpets speak; give them all  
breath, 9  
Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII. *Another part of the field.*

*Alarums. Enter MACBETH.*

*Macbeth.* They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he  
That was not born of woman? Such a one  
Am I to fear, or none.

*Enter young SIWARD.*

*Yo. Siw.* What is thy name?

*Macbeth.* Thou'lt be afraid to hear it. 5

*Yo. Siw.* No; though thou call'st thyself a hotter name

Than any is in hell.

*Macbeth.* My name's Macbeth.

*Yo. Siw.* The devil himself could not pronounce a title  
More hateful to mine ear.

*Macbeth.* No, nor more fearful.

*Yo. Siw.* Thou liest, abhorred tyrant; with my sword 10  
I'll prove the lie thou speak'st.

[*They fight, and young Siward is slain.*]

*Macbeth.* Thou wast born of woman.

But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,  
Brandish'd by man that's of a woman born. [Exit.]

*Alarums. Enter MACDUFF.*

*Macduff.* That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy face!  
If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine, 15

My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.

I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms  
Are hired to bear their staves: either thou, Macbeth,

Or else my sword, with an unbatter'd edge,

I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be; 20

By this great clatter, one of greatest note

Seems bruited: let me find him, fortune!

And more I beg not. [Exit. *Alarums.*]

*Enter MALCOLM and old SIWARD.*

*Siward.* This way, my lord; the castle's gently render'd:  
The tyrant's people on both sides do fight; 25

The noble thanes do bravely in the war;

The day almost itself professes yours,

And little is to do.

*Malcolm.* We have met with foes  
That strike beside us.

*Siward.* Enter, sir, the castle.

[*Excunt. Alarums.*]

SCENE VIII. *Another part of the field.**Enter* MACBETH.

*Macbeth.* Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
On mine own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes  
Do better upon them.

*Enter* MACDUFF.

*Macduff.* Turn, hell-hound, turn!

*Macbeth.* Of all men else I have avoided thee:  
But get thee back; my soul is too much charged 5  
With blood of thine already.

*Macduff.* I have no words:  
My voice is in my sword; thou bloodier villain  
Than terms can give thee out! [*They fight.*]

*Macbeth.* Thou lovest labour:  
As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air  
With thy keen sword impress, as make me bleed: 10  
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;  
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield  
To one of woman born.

*Macduff.* Despair thy charm;  
And let the angel whom thou still hast served  
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb 15  
Untimely ripp'd.

*Macbeth.* Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,  
For it hath cow'd my better part of man!  
And be these juggling fiends no more believed,  
That palter with us in a double sense; 20  
That keep the word of promise to our ear,

And break it to our hope! I'll not fight with thee.

*Macduff.* Then yield thee, coward,  
And live to be the show and gaze o' the time:  
We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are, 25  
Painted upon a pole, and underwrit,  
"Here may you see the tyrant."

*Macbeth.* I will not yield,  
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,  
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.  
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane, 30  
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,  
Yet I will try the last. Before my body  
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff;  
And damn'd be him that first cries "Hold, enough!"  
[*Exeunt, fighting. Alarums.*]

*Retreat. Flourish. Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, old SIWARD, ROSS, LENNOX, ANGUS, CAITHNESS, MENTEITH, and Soldiers.*

*Malcolm.* I would the friends we miss were safe arrived. 35

*Siward.* Some must go off: and yet, by these I see,  
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

*Malcolm.* Macduff is missing, and your noble son.

*Ross.* Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt:  
He only lived but till he was a man; 40  
The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd  
In the unshrinking station where he fought,  
But like a man he died:

*Siward.* Then he is dead?

*Ross.* Ay, and brought off the field: your cause of sorrow  
Must not be measured by his worth, for then 45

It hath no end.

*Siward.* Had he his hurts before?

*Ross.* Ay, on the front.

*Siward.* Why then, God's soldier be he!  
Had I as many sons as I have hairs,  
I would not wish them to a fairer death:  
And so, his knell is knoll'd.

*Malcolm.* He's worth more sorrow, 50  
And that I'll spend for him.

*Siward.* He's worth no more:  
They say he parted well, and paid his score:  
And so, God be with him! Here comes newer comfort.

*Re-enter MACDUFF, with MACBETH'S head.*

*Macd.* Hail, king! for so thou art: behold, where stands  
The usurper's cursed head: the time is free: 55  
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,  
That speak my salutation in their minds;  
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine:  
Hail, King of Scotland!

*All.* Hail, King of Scotland! [*Flourish.*

*Malcolm.* We shall not spend a large expense of time 60  
Before we reckon with your several loves,  
And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,  
Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland  
In such an honour named. What's more to do,  
Which would be planted newly with the time,— 65  
As calling home our exiled friends abroad,  
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny;  
Producing forth the cruel ministers  
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,  
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands 70

Took off her life; this, and what needful else  
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,  
We will perform in measure, time and place:  
So, thanks to all at once and to each one,  
Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

R.

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[*Flourish. Exeunt.*]

## NOTES.

G. = *Glossary*. Several other abbreviations used sometimes in the *Notes* are explained at the beginning of the *Glossary*, in which they occur more frequently. They should be observed; see p. 205.

## ACT I.

## Scene 1.

The introduction of the Witches at the very outset of the tragedy is deeply significant. "In *Macbeth*, the poet's object was to raise the mind at once to the high tragic tone, that the audience might be ready for the precipitate consummation of guilt in the early part of the play. The true reason for the first appearance of the Witches is to strike the keynote of the character of the whole drama"—*Coleridge*.

The Witches, in fact, diffuse around them that atmosphere of guilt and evil which hangs as a pall over the whole play: they usher us into a Hades where all is murky, and goodness suffers a long eclipse, though ultimately triumphant.

As the moment of their first appearance is significant, so are the scene and atmospheric setting. "They appear in a desert place, with thunder and lightning; it is the barren place where evil has obtained the mastery of things"—*Dowden*. And the storm (created, like that in *The Tempest*, by incantation) not only harmonises with their grotesque guise and rites, it is a symbol also of the present convulsion in Duncan's kingdom, and of the still greater convulsion to come: a counterpart to the hurlyburly of battle and murder.

A precisely similar effect is gained by the storm-scenes in *King Lear*. There too the convulsion in the physical world corresponds (1) with the convulsion in the moral world which has overthrown all the natural

relations of family, and (2) with the tempest in Lear's own heart (a thought specially indicated in III. 1. 10, 11). We may compare also *Julius Cæsar*, I. 3, where the "tempest dropping fire" (10) seems to the heated imaginations of the conspirators to typify the work they have in hand—the heavens and their schemes being alike "Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible" (130). This adjustment of natural surroundings and phenomena to the action, whether for effects of sympathy or contrast, is peculiar to modern "romantic" literature.

Often in modern writers the device is carried yet further and becomes that "pathetic fallacy" which ascribes to Nature an interest, friendly or adverse, in Man and his affairs: a conception unknown to the classics. Many fine illustrations might be cited from Tennyson, e.g. the oft-quoted lines in *Maud*, "There has fallen a splendid tear" etc., and the "death-white mist" in *The Passing of Arthur*.

As regards the metre of the parts assigned to the Witches, note Abbott's remark: "The verse with four accents is rarely used by Shakespeare, except when witches or other extraordinary beings are introduced as speaking. Then he often uses a verse of four accents with rhyme." Cf. for instance many of the fairy portions of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, e.g. Puck's speeches II. 2. 66—83, v. 378—397, 430—445. This 4-stressed metre is ordinarily of the so-called trochaic type (line 1) varied by the iambic (line 2); the trochaic lines often having a single, stressed syllable in the 4th foot—e.g.

"Whén the | húrly|búrly's | dóné,  
Whén the | báttle's | lóst and | wón."

*three Witches.* *Three*, with its multiple *nine* (I. 3. 36), is, of course, a mysterious number.

1. The 1st Folio has a note of interrogation at the end of the line; but there should be no stop at all: "the question has regard to the *time*, not the *season*, of the witches' next meeting"—*Symons*.

3. *hurlyburly*, uproar, tumult; referring to the turmoil of battle and rebellion (Scene 2). See G.

8—12. The distribution of these speeches is somewhat uncertain, but probably each Witch in turn should be made to address her attendant spirit or "familiar" (supposed to be impatiently awaiting her), while all join in the jingling couplet "Fair is foul" etc.

The 1st Folio assigns line 8 to the First Witch and then ends thus:

"All. Padock calls anon: faire is foule" etc.

8, 9. *Graymalkin*; a common name for a gray cat; see G. *paddock*, a toad; cf. *Hamlet*, III. 4. 190, and see G.



It was one of the popular notions associated with witchcraft that the familiar spirits in the service of magicians and witches took the form of animals and other creatures. Every student of Goethe will remember the poodle in *Faust*. Ariel, the spirit attendant on Prospero in *The Tempest*, has a bird-form. The "familiar" of malign beings like the Witches would take less attractive shapes. Editors quote from Scot's *Discoverie* [i.e. 'uncovery, exposure'] of *Witchcraft*, 1584 (the standard Elizabethan work on current superstition and myth), "Some say they (witches) can keepe divels and spirits in the likeness of *todes and cats*."

In *The Witch*, I. 2, Middleton makes Hecate summon to her rites "devil-toad" and "devil-cat" with other evil spirits, and afterwards (III. 3) say:

"Now I go, now I fly,  
Malkin my sweet spirit and I."

10. *Anon!* in a moment! coming!

11. *Fair is foul, and foul is fair*, i.e. in the eyes of the Witches. The line (which has a proverbial ring) is a compendium of their creed, like Satan's "Evil, be thou my good," *Paradise Lost*, IV. 110. The Witches' enunciation here of their guiding principle serves as a sort of signal to us, a warning of what we must expect from them. The line might also bear, and possibly is intended to bear, the secondary sense that appearances are deceptive: if so, it hints at the foulness underlying the fairness of character in Macbeth which deceives Duncan and brings Banquo to his doom. Some think that primarily the line refers to the tempest as being favourable to witchcraft and its rites (line 2); be this as it may, some moral meaning is also intended.

Coleridge remarked on "the different language of the Witches with each other, and with those whom they address: the former displays a certain fierce familiarity, grotesqueness mingled with terror; the latter is always solemn, dark, and mysterious." The distinction is a notable point of Shakespeare's characterisation of these awful beings who "blend in themselves the Fates and Furies of the ancients with the sorceresses of Gothic and popular superstition."

## Scene 2.

Many critics consider that the text of this Scene has been much mutilated, through some unknown cause. But in part, at any rate, the abruptness or exaggeration of style is accounted for by the circumstances: the greater portion consists of the speeches of the Sergeant and Ross.

each just come from the stress of battle—the one wounded. Coleridge seems to think that the style is intentionally epic rather than tragic—cf. the picturesque imagery of 8, 9, 25—28, 35—38—the epic manner being traditionally associated with narratives of battle. The quasi-historical element is due to Holinshed.

3. *sergeant*; scan as three syllables. (1) “Holinshed mentions, in his account of Macdowald’s rebellion, that the king sent a *sergeant at arms* to bring up the chief offenders to answer the charges preferred against them; but the latter misused and slew the messenger. This *sergeant at arms* is certainly the origin of the *bleeding sergeant* here introduced. Shakespeare just caught the *name* from Holinshed, but disregarded the rest of the story.” (2) “In ancient times *sergeants* were not the petty officers now distinguished by that title, but men performing one kind of feudal military service, in rank next to *esquires*”; and specially deputed to guard the person of the king. (F.)

4. *hardy*, brave; F. *hardi*.

5. *Hail*; scan as two syllables. Monosyllables containing diphthongs or long vowels—e.g. *sleep*, *sweet*, *cold*, *speak*, etc.—since they allow the voice to dwell on them, often take the place of a whole foot.

6. *the*, i.e. the knowledge you gained; *thy* is a needless change.

*broil*, battle, literally ‘confused struggle, turmoil’; cf. F. *brouiller*, ‘to jumble, confuse.’ Othello knew little more than “feats of broil and battle” (I. 3. 87).

7. The marked pause due to the division of the line between two speakers makes up for the omitted medial stress or accent.

9. *choke their art*, render useless their skill in swimming; from *choke* = ‘to suffocate,’ and so ‘to destroy, nullify.’ The use of the word is obviously appropriate to the context.

*Macdonwald*; the *Macdowald* of Holinshed’s narrative.

10. *to that*, to that end, viz. “to be a rebel”: he has many evil qualities which naturally fit him for the part.

13. *kerns...gallowglasses*; light-armed and heavy-armed Irish soldiers; see each word in G. Cf. v. 7. 17, 18. Holinshed says of *Macdonwald*:

“He vsed also such subtyll persuasions and forged allurements, that in a small time he had gotten together a mightie power of men: for out of the westerne Isles there came vnto him a great multitude of people, offering themselues to assist him in *that rebellious quarell*, and out of Ireland in hope of the spoile came no small number of *Kernes and*

*Galloglasses*, offering gladlie to serue vnder him, whither it should please him to lead them."

The idiom "supplied of" means, I think, 'supplied in respect of,' and so 'furnished with.'

14, 15. i.e. Fortune showed herself as it were the mistress of the rebel and espoused his cause; but Macbeth, supported by a higher power, viz. Valour (19), made the aid of Fortune unavailing. Some think that *show'd* implies deception on the part of Fortune: she smiled on him, but deceived him.

*damned quarrel*, detestable, accursed cause. Elizabethan writers sometimes use *quarrel* (Lat. *querela*, 'a complaint') in the sense 'cause, motive of dispute'; cf. *Julius Cæsar*, II. 1. 28. *Quarrel* is the word in the parallel passage of Holinshed (see 13, note), and it gives excellent sense.

The 1st Folio, however, has *quarry*, prey. See G. and cf. IV. 3. 201. *Quarry* (which must be taken passively) has been interpreted,

(1) "the slaughter and depredations made by the rebel";

(2) "his army doomed to become the prey of his enemies"—hardly a possible sense.

A very fanciful notion is that *quarry* has the rare meaning 'arrow,' and so 'weapon.' Most editors adopt the emendation *quarrel*. (F.)

*all's too weak*; the historic present among preterites is certainly strange; but cf. *swells* in 28. Pope omitted 's, making the sense 'though all too weak' (i.e. Fortune was).

18. *execution*. Scan the *-ion* as *i-ön*; that is, sounding the *i* instead of slurring it into the next syllable, which is stressed lightly. In Shakespeare and in Milton's early poems the termination *-ion*, especially with words ending in *-ction*, such as 'perfection,' 'distraction,' is often treated as two syllables, especially at the end of a line. In Middle English poetry the termination *-ion* was always two syllables. See 25.

19. *minion*, favourite; here not, as usually, in a contemptuous sense; see G.

20. "This irregular line [like 41] is explained by the haste and excitement of the speaker"—*Abbott*.

21. *Which*, who (i.e. Macdonwald); a common Elizabethan use; cf. the Bible often.

*shook hands*. The line is considered to allude "to the formal hand-shaking which preceded a duel."

The whole passage (20—23), with its mixture of *he-s* and *him-s* referring now to the one combatant, now to the other, is confused,

and some corruption of text is suspected. But the confusion may be due to the causes mentioned above (line 20, note).

22. *unseam'd*, ripped open. *navel*, *navel*, middle. *Nave* means commonly the boss or centre of a wheel and does not appear to be used elsewhere in the sense of its diminutive *navel*. *Nape* (i.e. of the neck) has been suggested, but editors aptly cite from the old tragedy *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1594), by Marlowe and Nash (II. 1. 256):

“Then from the *navel* to the throat at once  
He ripp'd old Priam”;

and I think that this description may have been present to Shakespeare's mind here, since it occurs in the passage which undoubtedly inspired part of the First Player's speech in *Hamlet*, II. 2. 494—496. The quotation, therefore, makes *nave* the original reading a more probable word here than *nape*.

24. *cousin*. Holinshed says that *Duncan* and *Macbeth* were the sons respectively of the two daughters, *Beatrice* and *Doad*, of *Malcolm*, the predecessor of *Duncan* on the throne.

25—28. *As whence the sun* etc. “As storms often come from the east, the region of the dawn, so victory may be the starting-point for a fresh attack”—*Herford*.

28. *swells*. The word suggests “a destructive flood” where the benefit of a fertilising stream had been looked for. (F.) The change *wells* or *well'd* is not necessary.

30. *skipping*; appropriate to light armed troops; see 13, note.

31. *the Norwegian lord*, *Sweno* (60). Having described the suppression of *Macdonwald's* rebellion and his death by suicide, Holinshed says:

“Thus was iustice and law restored againe to the old accustomed course, by the diligent means of Makbeth. Immediatlie wherevpon word came that Sueno king of Norway was arriued in Fife with a puissant armie, to subdue the whole realme of Scotland.” The Chronicler then narrates the utter defeat of the invaders, followed by the arrival and rout of a *second* army “sent by Canute king of England in revenge of his brother Suenos ouerthrow.” There were, therefore, according to Holinshed, two invasions by the northerners, but Shakespeare combines them for the sake of dramatic compression. Mr Stone characterises both invasions, *Sweno's* and *Canute's*, as fictions.

34. *captains*; to be scanned as three syllables, like F. *capitaine*. Editors quote 3 *Henry VI.* IV. 7. 30, “A wise | stout cap|(i)tain, | and

soón | persuaded"; and Fletcher's *Island Princess*, II. 3, "I heár | anó-  
ther túne, | good cáp|(i)tain."

37. *cracks*; "the word describing the explosion is applied to the charge"—*Herford*; cf. IV. I. 117. Editors quote the old play (not Shakespeare's) of *King John*:

"as harmless and without effect

As is the echo of the cannon's crack."

40. *memorize another Golgotha*, i.e. create by slaughter of the enemy another "place of a skull" as famous in tradition as that mentioned in Scripture (*Matt.* xxvii. 33, *Mark* xv. 22).

45. *thane*; see G.

46, 47. *so should*, so ought, so might that man ("he") be expected to. *seems to*, shows by his appearance that he is about to; has the appearance of being a messenger of strange tidings.

*Enter Ross*. The 1st Folio adds *and Angus*. But no speech is assigned to Angus in what follows, nor is he addressed at all (cf. 48), nor does he afterwards know (I. 3. 114) what is here (52, 53) mentioned; hence many regard the stage-direction as faulty.

49, 50. *flout*, mock; meaning, I think, that for Norwegian flags to be flying there was an insult to the Scottish heavens.

*fan our people cold*; paralyse our countrymen with fear as they wave in the wind. *Fan* is used similarly of waving flags in *Henry V.* Prol. III. 6.

The two verbs must be historic presents, describing the first stage of the contest when the Norwegians in virtue of their greater numbers promised themselves assured victory over the Scots. The description is quite inapplicable to a defeated army, and cannot therefore refer to the present state of the defeated Norwegians.

*Norway*, the king of Norway; cf. "England," IV. 3. 184.

52, 53. We have here a striking deviation from Holinshed. He does not mention Cawdor in connection with Sweno at all, or give any details about his "treason against the king committed"; and he places Cawdor's deprivation of his title, lands and offices "shortlie" after Macbeth's first meeting with the Witches. See **Extract 2** from Holinshed. The dramatist associates Cawdor with Sweno, and thereby antedates his deprivation, for two reasons: (1) to account at once for the deprivation, (2) to make the news of it reach Macbeth at the first great crisis of the drama (I. 3. 104—107).

53. *began*; scan 'gan, prefixes being often clipped thus, e.g. 'gainst (56) for *against*. *dismal*; see G.

54. *Bellona's bridegroom*, i.e. Macbeth, the very spouse of *Bellona* herself (the Roman goddess of war, *bellum*).

The phrase is a superlative term of admiration which exactly fits the context. The speaker feels that all would know to whom alone it could be applied; hence the omission of Macbeth's name—a suggestive touch.

*lapp'd in proof*, encased in impenetrable armour; armour-clad; see *proof* in G.

55. *him*, i.e. "Norway himself." *self-comparisons*; the plural implies 'points of comparison (i.e. equality) between their two selves,' such as strength, skill, etc. Macbeth proved himself in all ways a match for the Norwegian king.

56. *rebellious*; not strictly applicable to "Norway himself," but he was in league with the rebel Cawdor.

57. *lavish*, unrestrained, insolent; cf. 1 *Henry VI.* II. 5. 46—49:

"Some words there grew 'twixt Somerset and me;

Among which terms he used his lavish tongue

And did upbraid me with my father's death."

*Lavish* is from an obsolete verb meaning 'to pour out': whence the idea 'bounteous, prodigal,' and so 'unrestrained.'

59. *That*, so that.

60. *Norways'*, Norwegians'. *composition*, terms of peace, agreement. We speak of people '*composing* their differences,' i.e. settling them.

61—63. From Holinshed:

"They [i.e. of the enemy] that escaped and got once to their ships, obtained of Makbeth for a great summe of gold, that such of their friends as were slaine at this last bickering, might be buried in saint Colmes Inch. In memorie whereof, manie old sepultures are yet in the said Inch, there to be seene grauen with the armes of the Danes, as the maner of burieng noble men still is, and heeretofore hath beene vsed."

Holinshed, however, is really speaking of the defeat of the second Danish army sent by Canute. We have seen that Shakespeare combined the two campaigns, Sweno's and Canute's.

62. *Saint Colme's inch*; "the island of Inchcolm off the coast of Fife, in the Firth of Forth, once occupied by St Columba, the first teacher of Christianity to the Picts." There are remains there of an abbey dedicated to *St Columba* (whence *Colme*). *Inch* is said to mean 'a small island' in the Erse (Irish) language.

63. *dollars*; see G.

65. *Our bosom interest*, our close affection for him; see I. 4. 13, 14. *present*, immediate; a very common Elizabethan use. So *presently* = 'immediately,' IV. 3. 140.

68. *noble Macbeth*. The scene closes on the note of Macbeth's glorification. It has given him already the first place in our thoughts, and we await his appearance with curiosity. His has been the inspiring, though invisible, presence throughout the scene. And it is in relation to him that what we may briefly term the Macdonwald-Sweno element has been introduced. For (1) through it we see the greatness of Macbeth as a soldier, and that greatness makes the tragedy of his fall so much more pitiful. Again, (2) his services in the campaign bring him a rich reward at the hands of the "gracious" Duncan: what the blackness, then, of his ingratitude! (3) This very reward becomes, by his previous evil meditations, an impulse towards the crime (I. 3. 116, 117). And (4) the step which the campaign naturally leads Duncan to take (I. 4. 35—39) forces Macbeth's hand. The whole scene, therefore, in which this Macdonwald-Sweno element is so prominent must, I think, be regarded as an essential piece of the fabric of the play.

### Scene 3.

*Scene. A heath*; cf. I. 1. 6. Dr Brandes makes the suggestive comment that Shakespeare "has altered the meadow-land, which Holinshed represents as lying around Inverness [see **Extract 1**], into the heath which is really characteristic of the district:" a change that heightens the "local colour" much.

*Enter the three Witches*. The meeting foreshadowed in Scene 1, and made more striking by the picture of Macbeth painted in Scene 2, is now at hand; and ere it takes place we may well ask who are these malign beings (unmatched elsewhere in Shakespeare) for whom "Witches" is to modern ears a scarcely adequate term.

"These witches or weird sisters are the embodiment, in visible form, of the malignant influences in nature which are ever on the alert to establish an unholy alliance with the criminal instincts of the human heart. Dowden rightly dismisses as inadequate Gervinus's interpretation of them as simply the embodiment of inward temptation. These 'posters of the sea and land' are not merely concrete symbols of a mental process; nameless and sexless though they be, theirs is an independent vitality of evil whirling through the universe till it finds asylum in a soul where germs of sin lie ready to be quickened into life.

That a subtle reciprocity already exists between Macbeth and these demoniacal forces is emphasized at the outset by Shakspeare, for the witches' anarchical formula, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair,' is echoed in the Thane's first words on the heath near Forres, 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen'—*Boas*.

It is, then, as personifications of the evil forces at work in the world, as embodiments of the active principle of evil in nature and in society, that we must view Macbeth's tempters. "They lead evil minds from evil to evil; and have the power of tempting those who have been the tempters of themselves"—*Coleridge*. He remarks subtly that while in character they are essentially a creation of Shakespeare—beings to whom Elizabethan or earlier literature presented no close parallel—yet the poet has been careful to make them "present a sufficient external resemblance, to the creatures of vulgar prejudice to act immediately on the [imagination of the] audience." And this resemblance is heightened by all the traditional accessories and externals of popular demonology.

2. *Killing swine*. It was a superstition that sorcerers and witches caused animals, especially swine, to die, by "overlooking" them and by other devices, if they had a grudge against the owners. Of this belief, as of others mentioned in connection with the Witches, and of their rites and incantations, it would be easy to quote numerous illustrations from writers of the 16th and 17th centuries; but I do not see that to do so would serve any useful purpose. These things have a purely antiquarian interest.

6. *Aroint thee, begone*. *rump-fed*; commonly interpreted 'pampered,' literally 'fed on the best joints'; this seems more likely than the opposite sense 'offal-fed.'

*ronyon*, scurvy creature. See *aroint* and *ronyon* in G.

7. *Tiger* was a not uncommon name for a ship; cf. *Twelfth Night*, v. i. 65. Hakluyt's *Voyages* mentions a trading-expedition to Aleppo which sailed in a vessel called the *Tiger* in 1583 and disembarked at Tripoli in Syria, the nearest port to Aleppo. (F.)

An allusion like this reminds us that travel was one of the chief influences at work in Shakespeare's time. "We may" (it has been well said) "trace everywhere in Elizabethan literature the impression made by the wonders told by the sailors and captains who explored and fought from the North Pole to the Southern Seas." The great collection of narratives of travel and adventure was Hakluyt's *Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598—1600).

The Elizabethan trade with the Levant and Asia Minor is glanced at



in *Twelfth Night*, v. 1. 64, in the reference to Candy, i.e. the island of Candiā (Crete), whence spices and stuffs such as cambric and "cypress" were imported. Cf. Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, 1. 1.

8. That witches could sail on the sea, however tempestuous, "in a riddle or sieve," cockle-shell or egg-shell; could assume the form of any animal minus the tail; had control over the winds, and made money of their power by selling favourable winds to sailors "in glasses" or through "tying of certain knots upon a rope"; could cause a person to pine away by making a waxen image of him and then sticking pins into it and dissolving it before a fire (cf. Rossetti's *Sister Helen* and Hardy's great work, *The Return of the Native*): these were all current notions of 16th—17th century (and later) demonology.

The references to the sea (8 and 11—17) had a special interest for the Elizabethans from the story of King James's unlucky voyage on his return from Denmark in 1589, when he was bringing home his Danish bride.

10. *do*, work, i.e. gnaw through the bottom of the ship.

15. *blow*, blow upon. Apparently the sense is that she exercises control over all the ports into which the winds might carry a ship, and so can, if she chooses, prevent the ship reaching the port safely. For *ports* an obvious suggestion is *points* (i.e. of the wind).

17. *the shipman's card*; defined as "the circular card, marked with the 32 points of the compass, for the steersman's use"; commonly called the *compass-card*, to which the needle of the compass points. Cf. the phrase 'by the card,' as in 'to speak by the card,' i.e. with great precision, exactly. Hamlet says: "How absolute [positive] the knave is! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us" (v. 1. 148, 149).

*Card*, either by itself or in phrases like *Card of the Sea*, *Mariner's Card*, *Sea-Card*, was also used in the 16th cent. in the sense of *Chart*, so that sometimes its exact force is doubtful; but here *compass-card* is certainly the meaning.

18—23. This may have been suggested by a story in Holinshed how King Duff of Scotland was once "vexed with no naturall sicknesse, but by sorcerie and magicall art, practised by a sort [i.e. set] of witches dwelling in a toune called Fores," who bewitched the king through the medium of a waxen image.

18. *drain him dry*; "exhaust the moisture from his body"—*Hunter*.

20. *pent-house*; properly a shed or outhouse sloping down from a

main building, much as the eyelid slopes when closed; see G. The *Century Dict.* cites a parallel use from Tennyson's *Merlin and Vivien*:

“He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down, and made  
A snowy pent-house for his hollow eyes.”

21. *forbid*; some interpret ‘cursed, blasted’—others ‘excommunicated’; probably the latter, from the ecclesiastical notion of placing a guilty man under the Church’s ban, i.e. forbidding him its rites and benefits.

28. *pilot*, steersman; the man at the helm.

29. *homeward*; a pathetic touch, emphasising the Witch’s malignity.

32. *The weird sisters*; the 1st Folio has *wayward*. Theobald first saw that the word intended was *weird*, the whole phrase signifying literally ‘the fate-sisters,’ hence ‘those who are the ministers of Destiny.’ See **Extract 1** from Holinshed. There does not appear to be any resemblance between the old forms of *weird* (see G.) and *wayward* such as might account for the Folio’s reading.

33. *posters of*, messengers or swift travellers o’er.

35. *to thine*, to thy side. In the representation of a play a gesture often supplements and explains the spoken word; cf. II. 1. 5.

*Enter Macbeth and Banquo*. The interview between Macbeth and the Witches must be viewed in the light of the great fact that Macbeth had already contemplated the murder of Duncan and spoken to his wife about it; see I. 5. 1—28, I. 7. 47—52. Hence there exists a guilty sympathy between Macbeth and the Witches, which he is made to show unconsciously in his very first words (an echo of theirs in I. 1. 11). The soil has been prepared, so that their poisonous suggestion strikes root quickly. He is surprised into premeditated crime by sudden temptation. Banquo on the other hand is the loyal soldier wholly free from these prepossessions of guilt: hence, while Macbeth is “rapt” into silent musing and uneasy questions in which he fears to betray what is in his heart, Banquo comments coolly and freely on the Witches and their salutation, as one to whom the incident is purely external and impersonal: *his* questions being “such as a girl might put after hearing a gipsy tell her schoolfellow’s fortune—all perfectly general or rather planless”—*Coleridge*. Banquo serves essentially as a foil or contrast to Macbeth. “He is to Macbeth what Horatio is to Hamlet”—*Boas*.

The question is sometimes asked, how does the “supernatural” (130) influence that assails Macbeth differ from the notion of Fate which plays so great a part in Greek tragedy? The gist of the answer is that

Shakespeare endows all characters with the freewill by which a man can withstand his so-called Fate, if he chooses. Banquo and Macbeth pass through the same ordeal: the one is unscathed, the other succumbs; and he succumbs, we are made to feel, because he chooses to dally with the thought of Duncan's murder.

38. *So foul and fair a day*; referring solely to the sunshine and storm, the struggle of which answers, as has been said, to the moral strife in Macbeth's heart: indeed, "foul and fair" is a summary of his divided character. There is no allusion to the battles mentioned in Scene 2, though "day" often means battle (e.g. in v. 7. 27).

As regards Macbeth's echoing of the Witches' parting cry in I. I. 11, Dowden says: "Shakspeare intimates by this that although Macbeth has not yet set eyes upon these hags, the connection is already established between his soul and them. Their spells have already wrought upon his blood." I am not sure whether we can assume as much as this: the Witches' power is an unknown quantity. But we may safely see in the verbal resemblance—whether or not Macbeth stumbles on it by chance—an indication of the "elective affinity" between tempters and tempted. And the unconscious indication is the first note of the "irony" (see p. 250) which characterises *Macbeth* above all Shakespeare's plays.

39. *Forres*; about midway between Elgin and Nairn, near the Moray Firth; the railway passes through it.

40. *wild in their attire*; a reminiscence of Holinshed; see **Extract 1**.

44. *choppy*; see G.

45. *should*; cf. I. 2. 46.

46. *beards*. It was a popular notion that witches were always bearded.

48—50. Direct from Holinshed; see **Extract 1**. Note that they ignore Banquo's address and turn to Macbeth, their anticipated (I. I) victim.

Coleridge, in a subtle analysis of the characteristics of the genius which makes great generals, says: "Superstition, of one sort or another, is natural to victorious generals; the instances are too notorious to need mention": the main reason being that "chance," or what seems chance, plays so large a part in warfare. A signal instance is Napoleon with his belief in his "star," lucky days, etc.

It should be observed too that the ambitious promptings of the Witches come to Macbeth just when he is full of the elation of victory.

49. Here again there is "irony" of situation, for we know what Macbeth does not yet know, viz. that Cawdor's title *has* already passed to him.

51. *why do you start...?* Such touches bring out the inner working of guilty thoughts. The prophecy of kingship is not merely an echo of Macbeth's secret ambitions, it advances them a stage: to him they will no longer be quite the same; what has hitherto been vague and visionary becomes now a definite entity, an aim.

53. *fantastical*, imaginary; creations of the fancy. Another reminiscence of Holinshed's language (**Extract 2**, line 1); cf. 139.

54. *show*, appear; often intransitive in Shakespeare.

55. *present grace*, i.e. the title which Macbeth already enjoys as "thane of Glamis" (48).

56. *noble having*, possession; referring to the next "noble" title given him, "thane of Cawdor" (49).

57. *That*, so that; cf. I. 2. 59. *rapt*, transported; see G.

60, 61. i.e. "who neither beg your favours nor fear your hate."

67. *get*, beget; an allusion to the tradition that the House of Stuart was descended from Banquo. The line is one of several compliments to King James in *Macbeth*. Indeed, the choice of the play's subject was a compliment to him, and its "setting wholly in harmony with the accession of a Scottish King" to the English throne.

70. Some movement of departure by the Witches rouses Macbeth from his reverie.

71. *Sinel*, Macbeth's father. See Holinshed, **Extract 1**. The name was *Finnlaec*.

72, 73. This is inconsistent with I. 2. 50—66. Macbeth must have known that Cawdor was a captured rebel whose title and possessions would naturally be forfeited: how then could he describe Cawdor as "a prosperous gentleman"? The discrepancy cannot well be a slip, and some editors see in it a strong argument that Shakespeare did not write I. 2. 50—66, or Scene 2 at all; or that at least considerable corruption of the text of that scene has taken place.

Personally I hold that the discrepancy is designed and accountable for thus: Macbeth does not know who the Witches are or how much they can tell him: hence his subsequent enquiries (see I. 5. 1—3). But he himself, coming straight from the battle, knows about Cawdor what the Witches, if mere mortals, are not likely to know; so he feigns ignorance to test their knowledge. Further, he is desperately moved to enquire about the prophecy of kingship, but dare not say much for fear

of betraying his thoughts; so he challenges their lesser "prediction" (i.e. about Cawdor) by putting it in the most improbable light; his hope being that the challenge will not only serve to test their knowledge but also spur them to say something more about the greater prophecy.

No doubt, this explanation would be far-fetched if Macbeth had replied immediately to the Witches' threefold salutation (48—50). But note that he has ample time to mature a plan, and that he has to play a double part from line 50 onwards; the part, that is, of one who wants to discuss a thing and learn more about it, yet dreads to expose his inner thoughts and rouse suspicion.

76. *owe*, have, possess; see G.

77. Milton remembered this line; cf. *Par. Lost*, I. 612—615:

"as, when Heaven's fire

Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,

With singed top their stately growth, though bare,

Stands on the blasted heath."

81. *corporal*, corporeal; both forms were in current Elizabethan use.

82. *As breath*; Coleridge remarks on the appropriateness of the simile to a cold climate.

84. *the insane root*, the root that produces insanity; variously taken to mean hemlock, henbane, or deadly-nightshade. It has been suggested that Shakespeare was thinking of a story in Holinshed—how "the Scots won the victory by drugging the Danes [under Sweno], who incautiously accepted from Duncan a present of ale and bread, compounded with 'the juice of mekilwoort berries.'" This "mekilwoort" seems from another Chronicler to be deadly-nightshade, the berries of which were thought to induce sleep.

Scan *insane*, and see note on II. 3. 41.

91. *Thy personal venture*; cf. I. 2. 16—23.

92, 93. *Wonder* is that silent feeling of admiration of which *praise* is the inadequate expression. The instinct of the highest admiration is to be silent, not to speak where speech is bound to fail in its attempt to express the admiration—as in the presence of some wonderful landscape or building or picture. And so Duncan, as he hears of Macbeth's achievements, is moved by each to a fresh feeling of wonder (note the plural) which makes mere "praise" (the spoken words) difficult, though not to give praise will appear grudging and ungracious: thus he is tonguetied with the conflict—"silenced with that."

96. *afear'd*; see G.

97, 98. The 1st Folio has

“As thick as *tale*

*Can post*” etc.

*Can* is plainly wrong, and “as thick as *tale*” seems scarcely possible, though it has been interpreted, ‘as fast as they could be told, i.e. counted’—from *tale*=‘number,’ as in “the tale of bricks,” *Exodus* v. 18. Most editors adopt Rowe’s correction (given in our text), and show that “as thick as *hail*” was a very common simile in Elizabethan writers, whereas nothing parallel to “as thick as *tale*” has been found anywhere. (F.)

104. *earnest*, pledge; cf. 132 and see G.

106. *addition*, title; cf. III. I. 100, and *King Lear*, II. 2. 26, v. 3. 68. Literally “something annexed to a man’s name, to show his rank, occupation...or otherwise to distinguish him; ‘style’ of address.” The original use is well illustrated in Fabyan’s *Chronicle* (1494): “He had an addycyon put to his name, and was called for his great myght and power, Constantyne the Great.” (*New E. Dict.*)

107. *devil*; slurred into a monosyllable, as in the Scotch pronunciation.

108, 109. Cf. v. 2. 20—22. How exactly does Macbeth say this? Perhaps with a great calm, a soldierly, iron self-restraint masking all the emotions that must surge through his being at this speedy confirmation of the lesser prediction.

111—114. The passage shows that Angus was not present in Scene 2. His ignorance is certainly hard to explain, since he has come with Ross, who knew the whole story of Cawdor’s defection.

111. We must scan *whether*=*wher* (as often), and slur *he was* into a single syllable.

112. *line*, strengthen, support; the metaphor of putting a new *lining* into. Cf. *Henry V.* II. 4. 7, 8:

“To line and new repair our townes of war

With men of courage and with means defendant.”

115. *confess’d*; cf. I. 4. 5.

118—120. Macbeth’s question (cf. 86) is designed to find out what Banquo thinks of the greater prophecy (50), though he only mentions the lesser (49).

120. *That trusted home*; “such trust, pushed to its logical consequence”—*Herford*. *home*, to the full; cf. *King Lear*, III. 3. 12, 13, “these injuries the king now bears will be revenged home.”

124—126. i.e. they win our trust by speaking the truth in trivial things so that they may deceive us in matters of vital importance.

Banquo's sincerity of vision, undimmed by the haze of ambition, perceives straightway the fact which Macbeth cannot see (nor his wife) till he is face to face with doom (v. 8. 19—22).

128. *swelling*, grand, magnificent, from the literal sense 'inflated,' as in *Henry V.*, a play which has a "prologue" or introductory speech to each "Act"; cf. *Prolog.* I. 3, 4:

"A kingdom for a stage, princes to act  
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!"

130—142. Of this soliloquy Coleridge says: "every word shows the early birth-date of his guilt." And it shows too the supreme quality of the man, viz. his imaginativeness, which makes him so liable to the influences of superstition, and which Nemesis uses as her instrument in punishing him. All through, fear and a sort of vague, morbid imagining torture Macbeth, and his fatal fancy is ever raising some fresh spectre. The whole speech is in one key: "horrid image," "horrible imaginings," "fantastical," "surmise." As has been well said, the distance is not great from extreme excitability of imagination, such as this speech reveals, to actual hallucinations (II. 1. 33). We have something parallel in the presentment of Lear's wild impulsiveness, which is but a prelude to actual insanity, in the early part of the tragedy.

130. *soliciting*, temptation.

134. *suggestion*; see G.

137. *fears*, causes of fear.

139. *fantastical*; cf. 53.

140. *my single state of man*. Shakespeare uses the expression *state of man* twice elsewhere, viz. in *Henry V.* I. 2. 184, and *Julius Cæsar*, II. 1. 67. In each case the context shows (I now think) that *state* has the notion 'body politic, kingdom'; thus Brutus, speaking of the interval between a man's first conception and his execution of some dreadful deed, says:

"The Genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then *in council*; and *the state of man*,  
*Like to a little kingdom*, suffers then  
The nature of an *insurrection*."

There, as in *Henry V.*, man is regarded as a microcosm (Gk. μικρὸς + κόσμος, 'little world') or epitome of the 'body politic,' just as he is often regarded as a microcosm of the macrocosm (μακρὸς + κόσμος, 'great world') or universe. These two passages determine the

meaning of *state* here and show that it cannot have the sense 'condition.'

I think that *single* might mean 'absolute' from the common meaning 'only, mere,' and that the whole phrase *my single state of man* = 'the very kingdom of my being.' Other suggested renderings are:

(1) 'the kingdom of myself,'

(2) 'my feeble body politic of man.'

In (1) *single* has the sense 'particular, individual' and merely emphasises *my*, in (2) it is depreciatory and means 'poor, mere, weak,' as in I. 6. 16.

For the notion that man is a microcosm, a reproduction on a small scale, of the universe, cf. *King Lear*, III. 1. 10, "his little world of man," and *Richard II.* v. 5. 9, "this little world," where *Richard* means himself; also *Coriolanus*, II. 1. 68, "If you see this in the map of my microcosm."

140—142. *function is smother'd* etc.; the power of action is lost in speculations, and only the imaginary—that which my fancy pictures but which as yet has no existence—possesses for me any actuality.

Furness quotes a good comment on 141, 142:

"That is, *facts* are lost sight of. I see nothing but what is unreal, nothing but the spectres of my own fancy...Macbeth's conscience here acts through his imagination, sets it all on fire, and he is terror-stricken and lost to the things before him, as the elements of evil, hitherto latent within him, gather and fashion themselves into the wicked purpose. His mind has all along been grasping and reaching forward for grounds to build criminal designs upon; yet he no sooner begins to build them than he is seized and shaken with horrors which he knows to be imaginary, yet cannot allay. Of this wonderful development of character Coleridge justly says: 'So surely is the guilt in its germ anterior to the supposed cause and immediate temptation.'"

143, 144. *chance may crown me* etc. Suggested probably by Holinshed (see **Extract 2**, last lines), and wonderfully true to the Macbeth of the play. He has been compared with Hamlet, whom he resembles more especially "in his tendency to procrastination, though with the Danish prince this has its root in excessive reflection, while in Macbeth's case it springs from morbid imaginings and aversion to the instruments by which alone his desires can be compassed." So here, scared, as it were, by the fearful picture which fancy paints, he turns away from the meditated crime, and takes momentary refuge in the thought that the prophecy may be fulfilled without the effort on his part to bring it about. But



circumstances force his guilty soul from this resting-place (I. 4. 35—39), by removing the “chance,” and he has to choose.

147. *Time and the hour* etc., i.e. the roughest (= most unpleasant) day will come to an end at last and bring, early or late, the appointed hour; that is, the hour which will see some particular matter done or decided. Editors show that such forms of expression as *time and the hour, day and long time, day and time*, were proverbial. The rhyme is simply that of a proverbial saying, of a commonplace such as fits his mood of indecision and unwillingness to face his own thoughts.

*runs*; singular because the two nouns really make up the single idea of the lapse of time.

148. *Worthy Macbeth*; the “irony”!

149, 150. He apologises (‘excuse me’) for his disregard of the others and invents a reason for his musings. *wrought*, moved, agitated.

151. *where*, i.e. in his memory.

154. *The interim having weigh’d it*. Abbott takes this as an instance of the omission of the preposition in adverbial expressions of time, manner, etc.: if so, interpret ‘let us, having weighed it *in* the interval’ etc. But it may, I think, be an absolute construction: ‘the interval having weighed,’ i.e. given us time to weigh it.

#### Scene 4.

2. *Those in commission*, those deputed to carry out Cawdor’s execution.

3—11. Steevens says: “The behaviour of the *thane of Cawdor* corresponds in almost every circumstance with that of the unfortunate Earl of Essex, as related by Stowe. His asking the Queen’s forgiveness, his confession, repentance, and concern about behaving with propriety on the scaffold, are minutely described. Such an allusion could not fail of having the desired effect on an audience, many of whom were eye-witnesses to the severity of that justice which deprived the age (1601) of one of its greatest ornaments, and Southampton, Shakespeare’s patron, of his dearest friend.” (F.)

It is, no doubt, hazardous to trace possible allusions of this kind to Elizabethan events. But Essex was an exceptional figure in Elizabethan history, to whom Shakespeare refers very pointedly in *Henry V.*, Prol. v. 29—34, and with whose conspiracy the history of *Richard II.* and *Julius Cæsar* may be not unconnected.

5. *confess'd*; cf. I. 3. 115.

7, 8. One of the numerous pieces of *Macbeth* that have become common quotations.

*the leaving it.* This idiom seems to represent a combination of (1) the verbal noun followed by *of*, and (2) the gerund without the article. Elizabethan usage with regard to the verbal forms in *-ing* was in a fluid state. All sorts of variations occur. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, v. 3. 38, "And then I swore thee, *saving of thy life*," i.e. *a-saving* (in the act of saving) thy life, I made thee swear; and *King Lear*, II. I. 40, 41, "Here stood he...*mumbl'ing of wicked charms*."

9. *studied*; i.e. as one who had rehearsed the act of meeting death. *Study* is the word used of an actor learning his part by heart; cf. *Hamlet*, II. 2. 566.

10. *owed*, possessed; see G.

11. *careless*; an illustration of the free Elizabethan use of adjectival and participial terminations.

11—14. The dreadful "irony" (for Duncan's words, said of Cawdor, apply equally to Macbeth, "the *deeper* traitor for whom Cawdor had made way!") speaks for itself. But we may note its peculiar appositeness. We feel that Macbeth's first meeting with the king after Scene 3 can be no ordinary meeting: we look for something—some touch of significance—and the "irony" just gives it. That the words should have their full effect Macbeth must be visible, approaching, as Duncan begins (11), and at the close Duncan should turn to greet him. The note of "irony" runs throughout the scene, e.g. "O *worthiest* cousin!" (14): "The sin of *my ingratitude*" (15): "a peerless kinsman" (58).

19. *the proportion*, the right proportion, the due relation.

20. *mine*, i.e. mine to give you; in my power to render.

21. *More is thy due* etc.; your desert exceeds more than all I can do to repay you; more than all I can do is due to you—aye, even more than that. It is an intentional hyperbola which shall leave nothing else to be said.

The point of the rhyme in 20, 21 is that it gives the effect of terse summing up. Its emphasis enables Duncan to cut short, yet not leave inadequate, those professions of gratitude which it must be as difficult to say as to receive.

Shakespeare does everything possible, within the limited scope for the exhibition of Duncan's character, to make him appear supremely regal, yet gracious. There is no hint of Holinshed's picture of Duncan

as a weak king unfit to rule. This flattering presentment of Duncan is, dramatically, the most striking of the deviations from Holinshed in *Macbeth*. Its purpose is clear: to make the king's fate more pitiful, the crime more detestable. See I. 7. 16—25.

23. *it*, i.e. what he owes. The service which he owes as a loyal subject is recompensed in the very discharge of its duty.

27. *Safe toward*. The best explanation seems to be 'with a sure regard to.' Cf. Schmidt: "everything that is sure to show you love and honour." Coleridge notes "the exceeding effort of Macbeth's addresses to the king": the traitor has to force himself to this lip-service, and the result is a strained style.

28. *I have begun to plant thee*; alluding to the bestowal of Cawdor's title on Macbeth. The metaphor is continued in Banquo's speech (32, 33).

30, 31. *nor...no*; the use of double negatives, expressing emphasis, is very common in Shakespeare.

34. *Wanton*; the word seems to have its literal notion 'unrestrained.'

37. *establish our estate upon*, settle the succession to the throne on. See **Extract 3** and note how closely Shakespeare follows Holinshed as regards the effect which Duncan's action had on Macbeth. Strictly, the Chronicler says that the nomination of Malcolm took place "shortlie after" the events mentioned in Scene 2, whereas this scene (4), according to the scheme of the play, falls on the very next day. But a dramatist is often forced to ignore historical intervals of time and compress the course of events. The nomination just fits in at this point, for the recent troubles would remind Duncan that an uncertain succession to the crown is an incentive to rebellion.

39. *The Prince of Cumberland*. Steevens says: "The crown of Scotland was originally not hereditary. When a successor was declared in the lifetime of a king (as was often the case), the title of *Prince of Cumberland* was immediately bestowed on him as the mark of his designation. *Cumberland* was at that time held by Scotland of the crown of England as a fief." (F.) So now the title of Prince of Wales marks its possessor as Heir-Apparent.

39—42. Cf. v. 8. 62—64. Perhaps we should understand that Malcolm simply carried out his father's intention as expressed here.

43. *bind us further*, lay us under deeper obligations.

44. *The rest*; "the rest which is not spent in the king's service is like severe labour"—*Hunter*.

45. *harbinger*; see G.

45, 46. His departure (really to concert a plot with her) naturally carries our thoughts forward to Lady Macbeth, whom we are not surprised to meet in the next scene. The stages in the unfolding of a plot form an interesting study, especially in a tragedy like *Macbeth*, where the dramatic movement sweeps swiftly on, down a single straight channel, to destruction. There is no by-plot to divert the current. Coleridge characterised *Macbeth* as "the most rapid" in movement of all Shakespeare's plays and insisted on the point.

50—53. The deed, already visualised by his excited fancy, is done at night (II. 1, 2). The rhyme lends a melodramatic tone, as if he had made up his mind and were taking the final plunge.

52. *wink at the hand*, i.e. be blind to its deeds.

54. *he is full so valiant*, he is, indeed, as brave as you say. They have been speaking, apart, about Macbeth during his soliloquy (48—53).

### Scene 5.

*Enter Lady Macbeth.* "It is no longer needful to labour the point that Lady Macbeth is not a Northern Fury, a virago of abnormal depravity and forbidding aspect. Perhaps, indeed, the pendulum has swung too far the other way, and some recent estimates of her character have been 'sympathetic' to a degree which Shakspeare would not have countenanced. It is plain, however, that the woman who is addressed by her husband as 'my dearest chuck' [III. 2. 45], and who talks of her 'little hand' [v. 1. 50], must have been feminine in feature and in bearing. Dr Bucknill, as the fruit of his medical experience, declared that she 'was a lady beautiful and delicate, whose one vivid passion proves that her organization was instinct with nerve force, unoppressed by weight of flesh. Probably she was small, for it is the smaller sort of woman whose emotional fire is the most fierce.' She had felt the softening influences of motherhood. She is knit to her husband by the closest bond, and lives but for and in him. She is not a tigress like Regan, a she-wolf like Margaret of Anjou, but a woman with the instincts of womanhood, which she cannot crush without a deliberate effort of will [1. 5. 38—45]"—*Boas*.

*reading a letter.* The letter shows us the impression which the meeting with the Witches made on Macbeth; also the close sympathy between him and his wife. Note too how here, as when he enters, he leaves it to her to broach openly what he has indirectly suggested.

It has been well remarked that Lady Macbeth seems unimpressed by Macbeth's account of the supernatural incident, except in so far as it is a means of influencing him. Whenever the supernatural comes into his life the contrast between him and his cool, sceptical wife, is seen in its clearest phase.

2. *report*, intelligence, information; showing that he has made enquiries.

6. *missives*, messengers; as in *Antony and Cleopatra*, II. 2. 74, the only other place where Shakespeare uses the word.

13—23. In studying the characterisation of a play we learn much by noting what the *dramatis personæ* say of each other: they probably know each other better than we do, and their criticisms must affect ours. Now no one knows Macbeth so intimately as his wife, and every line of this analysis of his character should be weighed (and illustrated by what he does and says in the play). There is in it a ring of absolute confidence in her knowledge of him and her influence over him: and the confidence is justified—up to a certain point: she knows his weaknesses and plays on them effectively: but she has, it seems to me, little of the imaginativeness which makes him the easy victim of Nemesis. Into this side of his character her insight penetrates but a short way. Hence she totally miscalculates the effect which acted crime will have on Macbeth's temperament, and in the blindness of her great love for him and the pride of her imperious will she raises forces which transport him ultimately not only beyond her influence but outside her very life.

As the speech tells us much about Macbeth, so it tells us a good deal about her: for analysis of the character of others necessarily involves something of self-revelation. She exemplifies in a high degree the influence of ambition as a force that sustains the will to a certain point, and overbears all scruples in self and others.

14. *fear*, fear for, i.e. fear the weakness of.

15. It has been objected that "throughout the drama we find no trace of this 'milk of human kindness'" in Macbeth. But throughout the drama we never see the natural, normal Macbeth—the "peerless kinsman" of whom Duncan and all have spoken so well. We see a man mastered by a "supernatural" temptation which incites him to a crime that revolutionises his life and brings into play whatsoever is evil and cruel in him. These glances at the good side of his character, at the normal Macbeth, heighten vastly the pity of his fall.

We must remember too that his wife is the speaker, and the tenderness of the relations between them is manifest, not merely in endearing

appellations, but in her absolute devotion to his interests (as she judges them) and in his reliance on her.

16. *the nearest way*; she grimly leaves unsaid the nearest way *to what*.

18. *illness*, evil, ill qualities; an unusual sense. *should*, i.e. which should. Omission of the relative pronoun where the sense is not obscured thereby is one of the commonest of Shakespearian ellipses. It is specially frequent when, as here, the verb follows the antecedent immediately.

19. *holily*, i.e. you would like to obtain it by innocent means; ignorant (as Coleridge comments) that to wish strongly for a thing is often to will the means of getting it: "hence the danger of indulging idle fancies."

20—23. *thou'ldst have* etc. Let us attempt a simple paraphrase:

'You would like, great Glamis, the thing (i.e. the crown) which as it were cries out to you "This is what you must do (i.e. murder Duncan) if you are to get what you desire (=it)," and you would like the deed (i.e. the murder) which you fear to do yourself but which if it *were* done you would not wish undone.'

I think that *have* (20) is used by a sort of zeugma, in two ways, and may be rendered by 'you would like'—thus: 'you would like (to possess) the crown, and you would like the deed, i.e. be glad that it should be done.' For *it* (21), Johnson proposed *me*='if you want me win me.' But *it* may fairly mean 'what you desire; your object.'

*That which cries*; most editors take *that which* to allude to the crown, personified. Some, however, refer it to Duncan's murder, and interpret *it* (21) of the crown. This meets the supposed difficulty about *it* (21), but seems to me to emphasise the deed more than the object aimed at. The whole drift of Lady Macbeth's speech is that Macbeth wants the *crown*—not the murder except as a means to the crown. Moreover, she does not say in 22 "and which": she says, "and *that* which," implying surely a second thing, not the *which* of 21. Also, the personification appears more natural if understood of the crown.

There are no marks of quotation in the 1st Folio, so we have an equal right to place them at the end of 21 or in the middle of 23 (after "undone"). The general run of the passage indicates, to me, that *have* in 20 is intended to govern two objects, viz. *That which* (=the crown) in 21, and *that which* (=the deed) in 22. With this interpretation we must make the imaginary speech end at 21.

23. How she misunderstands him! He wishes the deed "undone" almost in the doing (II. 2. 73, 74).

25, 26. *chastise*, i.e. drive away all the scruples and fears which may keep you from gaining the crown. Shakespeare always accents *chástise*, instead of the modern *chastise*; cf. *King John*, II. 1. 117, "And by whose help I mean to chastise it."

*round*; cf. IV. 1. 88, and *Richard II.* III. 2. 160, 161:

"the hollow crown

That rounds the mortal temples of a king."

27, 28. *seem*. To her excited fancy Macbeth's attainment of the crown seems almost a thing accomplished. Duncan, indeed, may still be the nominal king but in the counsels of Fate the transference of the crown to Macbeth is already effected! The whole point is lost in changes such as *seek*, *mean*, etc.

*metaphysical*, supernatural; see G. Editors show that the word *metaphysics* is defined in Elizabethan dictionaries as meaning 'supernatural arts,' 'things supernatural.' It seems to have been specially used in connection with magicians and witches; cf. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, I. 47, 48:

"These metaphysics of magicians

And necromantic books are heavenly";

where Dr Ward cites Marlowe's 2 *Tamburlaine*, IV. 3. 63, 64, which describes a mysterious ointment,

"Tempered by science metaphysical,

And spells of magic from the mouths of spirits."

29. *The king comes here to-night*. The surprise of this announcement throws her off her guard for an instant. It comes to her at a critical moment, as the announcement of his new title came to Macbeth (I. 3. 104—107). The superstitious might well think that "fate and metaphysical aid" were fighting for the evil scheme. But she quickly recovers her composure and tries (30, 31) to account for her excitement, lest the Messenger should suspect anything.

31. i.e. sent us word, so that we might prepare.

34. *for breath*, i.e. for want of; literally 'in respect of, as regards.' Cf. *Henry V.* I. 2. 114, "All out of work and cold for action." *more*, i.e. breath.

36. *The croaking raven*. She compares the Messenger to a raven. "The messenger, says the servant, had hardly breath 'to make up his message'; to which the lady answers, mentally, that he may well want breath: such a message would add hoarseness to the raven. That even the bird, whose harsh voice is accustomed to predict calamities, could not *croak the entrance* of Duncan but in a note of unwonted harshness"—*Johnson*.

For the superstition about the raven regarded as a bird of ill-omen cf. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 264 (the Players' scene), "The croaking raven doth bellow for revenge." So in Webster's *The White Devil*, III. 1 :

"How croaks the raven!

Is our good duchess dead?"

37. *entrance*; scan as 3 syllables, *ent-e-rance*. We often find an intrusive *e*-sound before *r* and *l*; as with the name *England* in *Richard II.* IV. 17, "Than Ból|ingbróke's | retúrñ | to Éng|e-lánd." See III. 6. 8.

38. *my*; as if her husband were a cipher! Note the pause in the middle, "wherein the speaker gathers and nerves herself up to the terrible strain that follows" (38—52).

Her apostrophe to the powers of evil seems a deliberate effort to force herself into an emotional state in which it will be possible for her to do a deed, the horror of which revolts her woman's sensibilities. For Lady Macbeth has been justly characterised as a woman of extreme nervous sensibility. Here she knows that she must "bend up" (I. 7. 79) her will to the breaking-point, if she is not to fail in the middle of the work which now she means to do herself (cf. 65, 66), though afterwards she makes Macbeth do it. And this intense strain on her will, by the natural process of reaction, contributes greatly to her ultimate state (v. 1).

39. *mortal*, murderous, deadly; cf. III. 4. 81.

41. *make thick my blood*; so that she may go about the work in a dulled, numbed state, and thus feel the horror of it less.

42. Scan *accéss. remorse*, pity. See both words in G.

43. *nature*, natural feeling.

44, 45. *keep peace between*, i.e. interpose as peace-maker between the purpose (*it*) and the execution (*effect*) of it. "If fear, compassion, or any other compunctious visitings, stand between a cruel purpose and its realization, they may be said to keep peace between them, as one who interferes between a violent man and the object of his wrath keeps peace"—*Knight*. (F.)

46. *take my milk for gall*. Either 'take away my milk and put gall in its place,' or 'nourish yourselves with my milk, which, through my being unsexed, has turned to gall.' Probably the latter.

47. *sightless*, invisible; see note on I. 4. 11.

48. *nature's mischief*, all that is cruel and destructive in the operations of nature. I think that *nature* is used in the widest sense and that the idea is much the same as in Tennyson's



“Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine.”

Some, however, take *nature* = ‘human nature,’ and interpret ‘man’s evil propensities’; others say simply ‘the destruction of life.’

49. *pall*, wrap as in a pall (Lat. *pallium*, ‘a cloak’).

Johnson, who cavilled at the wording of the passage (48—51), thought *dun* a “mean” term, but it is true as a piece of description here, and was sufficiently high-sounding for Milton (*Comus*, 127, “dun shades”; *Par. Lost*, III. 72, “the dun air” of Chaos). (F.)

51. *peep...blanket*; neither is of high dignity to modern ears, but verbal taste is “of an age,” not stereotyped for all time. Shakespeare uses *peep* of the sun (*Venus and Adonis*, 1088), and of the stars. Here the word is meant to imply that even a furtive glance at a deed so hideous would be all that Heaven itself could bear. “The *blanket* of the dark” is a very common metaphor: how often is night or darkness likened to a cloak or covering, especially where some dark deed has to be concealed. Cf. “night’s black mantle,” 3 *Henry VI.* IV. 2. 22; night’s “pitchy mantle,” 1 *Henry VI.* II. 2. 2; night’s “black all-hiding cloak,” *Lucrece*, 801. Here *blanket* (which to the “correct” Augustan school seemed almost a verbal indelicacy) is a strong term for a ‘curtain, covering,’ as in *Cymbeline*, III. 1. 44, “If Cæsar can hide the sun from us with a blanket.” Alterations such as *blank height*, *blankness*, need only be mentioned to be dismissed. (F.)

Editors cite similar pieces of robust, homespun imagery in Elizabethan writers, and we may remember how Milton himself, deviating for once into the manner of Donne and Crashaw, wrote (*Nativity Ode*, 229—231):

“So, when the sun in bed,  
Curtained with cloudy red,  
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave.”

The conclusion seems to be that Elizabethan taste in the matter of metaphor was less finicking than ours.

52. *cry* “Hold”; cf. v. 8. 34.

53. *the all-hail hereafter*. It has been well observed that she speaks as if she had actually heard the Witch’s salutation (I. 3. 50) and not merely read the letter, in which the word *hereafter* was not used, though represented by an equivalent (I. 5. 7—9). But note that Macbeth had written her more than one letter (54).

55. *ignorant*, i.e. unconscious of what lies before us, of our future greatness; in a way she personifies the “present.” Some, however,

take *ignorant* passively = 'unknown,' and so 'obscure' (i.e. compared with what is to come). I doubt whether this is a possible sense, in spite of the two places where *ignorant* is supposed to be passive, viz. *The Winter's Tale*, I. 2. 397, and *Othello*, IV. 2. 70. Thus in the latter ("Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?") it is surely a transferred epithet: 'what sin have I, being ignorant,' etc.

Either *feel* or *now* (probably the latter, by antithesis) must be emphasised to form two syllables.

56, 57. Spoken, I think, tentatively, with a slight hint of interrogation in the voice, to feel how far she has "laid to heart" his letter. And she replies in much the same tone, but a shade grimly, to feel how far the scheme has matured in *his* mind. But at the indication (58) that he may perhaps let the chance slip, from the irresolution which she knows so well (14—23), she drops the mask (58, 59).

59. The short line makes a strong pause which clinches the matter: let him make up his mind to *that* without more ado! I think that this is the intended effect of the broken line, rather than that "she pauses to watch the effect of her words till she continues"—*Abbott*.

61. *to beguile the time*, to deceive the world. Shakespeare often uses *the time* = 'the present time, the world, one's contemporaries'; cf. IV. 3. 10; so in *Hamlet's* (I. 5. 188, 189)

"The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right!"

Schmidt notes that Shakespeare also uses *beguile the time* in the more obvious sense 'to wile away the time'; cf. *Twelfth Night*, III. 3. 40—42:

"I will bespeak our diet,  
Whiles you beguile the time and feed your knowledge  
With viewing of the town."

65. *provided for*. This is surely the most ghastly euphemism in Shakespeare's works.

69. *We will speak further*. He can neither resist the dominating force of her personality nor yet "bend himself up" to definite assent. And so he half "saves his conscience" by deferring decision, the while drifting to the deed on the current of her overmastering will. The greater criminal because the suggester, the source, of crime, he adds the weakness which makes a paltering criminal contemptible as well as detestable.

70. *To alter favour ever is to fear*, to change countenance is always equivalent to, i.e. a sign of, being afraid. *favour*; see G.

## Scene 6.

Of the almost "lyrical" opening of this scene Sir Joshua Reynolds said: "This short dialogue between Duncan and Banquo has always appeared to me a striking instance of what in painting is termed *repose*. Their conversation very naturally turns upon the beauty of the [castle's] situation, and the pleasantness of the air; and Banquo, observing the martlets' nests in every recess of the cornice, remarks, that, where those birds most breed and haunt, the air is delicate. The subject of this quiet and easy conversation gives that repose so necessary to the mind after the tumultuous bustle of the preceding scenes, and perfectly contrasts the scene of horror that immediately succeeds. It seems as if Shakespeare asked himself, What is a prince likely to say to his attendants on such an occasion?... This also is frequently the practice of Homer, who, from the midst of battles and horrors, relieves and refreshes the mind of the reader by introducing some quiet rural image, or picture of familiar domestic life." (F.)

The time is evening, dark enough to make necessary the torches which heighten the picturesqueness of the scene, yet not so dark as to make it unnatural that the king and his companions should pause outside the castle and comment on its situation.

The "irony" of situation which lies in Duncan's praising the castle that is to be the place of his terrible end informs the whole scene. Its verbal expression is seen in his pointed use of the verbal currency of guestship. At Lady Macbeth's entrance, as at their exit, she is his "hostess": "our honoured hostess"—his "fair and noble hostess" (24); and each mention of the hallowed title, each reference such as "guest" in 25 and "host" in 29, is an unconscious reproach to her who has planned to violate so hideously the sacred laws of hospitality and kinship.

1. *seat*, situation. So Milton speaks of "the blissful seat of Paradise" in the Garden of Eden and calls it "A happy rural seat of various view" (*Par. Lost*, III. 527, IV. 247).

3. *gentle*, calm, composed, i.e. made placid by the "air."

4. *martlet*. The 1st Folio has the meaningless word *barlet*; all editors adopt the correction and compare *The Merchant of Venice*, II. 9. 28—30:

"Which,...like the martlet,  
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,  
Even in the force and road of casualty."

The word *martlet* is a diminutive of *martin*, a larger species of *hirundo*, or swallow; *martin* being the proper name *Martin*, applied to various birds and animals. "Thus *martin-pêcheur* is a kingfisher; *oiseau de S. Martin* is the ring-tail"—*Skeat*. *approve*, prove, show.

5. *By his loved mansionry*, by making it his favourite abode. The description seems to imply the yearly return of the bird to its old haunt. The 1st Folio has *mansonry*. Most editors read *mansionry*, some *masonry* (= 'building').

6. *jutty*; a part that projects like a *jutty*. The verb *jutty* (commonly *jut*) is used in *Henry V.* III. 1. 13, of a rock overhanging the sea. A *jetty* (whence the corrupted form *jutty*) is literally 'a thing thrown forward,' i.e. into the water; *F. jeter*, 'to throw.'

7. *coign of vantage*, convenient corner, i.e. for nesting in. The phrase has become a common quotation to signify 'any position that affords special facility for observation or action.' Properly *coign* means 'a projecting corner,' being an obsolete spelling of *coin*, 'a corner-stone' (as in *Coriolanus*, v. 4. 1), hence 'a corner, angle.' *F. coin*, 'a corner'; literally 'a wedge' (Lat. *cuneus*). The idea 'wedge' underlies the various senses of *coign* or *coin*. (*New E. Dict.*)

9. *most*; here again the 1st Folio has an obviously wrong reading, viz. *must*.

11. *sometime*. The Elizabethans often treat *sometime* = *sometimes*; cf. Milton in *L'Allegro*, 57, 58:

"Sometime walking, not unseen,  
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green."

13, 14. *God 'ild*, i.e. *yield* = 'reward, repay.' The original expression—'God *yield* you'—being an everyday form of thanks, got corrupted into various perversions, and the 1st Folio here has *god-eyld*. The Globe ed. prints *'ild*, because that is the form given elsewhere in the 1st Folio; cf. *As You Like It*, III. 3, 76 and v. 4. 56 ("I like him very well. God 'ild you, sir").

The sense of this passage (11—14) apparently is: the love of his subjects sometimes occasions Duncan "trouble" (11), but he accepts the "trouble" with thanks for the sake of the love: so Lady Macbeth and her husband should accept with thanks the "pains" and "trouble" (14) which his visit occasions, and be grateful to him, for the sake of the feeling which his visit shows—namely, his great regard for them. His remark, in fact, "is an elegantly punctilious way of saying that regard for Macbeth and his wife is the cause of his visit." (F.)

Note how "you" and "your" in 12—14 answer to "us" and "our" in the previous lines: the very fact of Duncan's drawing a parallel between himself and them is a compliment.

*bid God 'ild us*; practically equivalent to "thank" in 14; there is not, I think, any notion of asking a blessing on Duncan.

*your pains*, the trouble caused to you; the pains which you have to take. F. *peine*, 'trouble.'

14—19. Contrast Macbeth's (I. 4. 22—27) more laboured address. He, with treachery in his heart, could not summon to his lying lips the florid asseverations—the "hypocritical over-much"—which she pours forth.

16. *single*; in a depreciatory sense: 'poor, simple, unworthy,' from the sense 'no more than, mere, only'; and the same mock-humility is seen in *business* = 'affair' (as we say colloquially).

20. *We rest your hermits*, we are your debtors still, bound to remember you in our prayers. *Hermit* here has the same notion as "beadsman," literally 'a man of prayer' (from A.S. *biddan*, 'to pray') and so 'one who prays for his benefactor,' e.g. as the inmate of an almshouse who prayed for the person that founded it. Cf. *Titus Andronicus*, III. 2. 41, "As begging hermits in their holy prayers." See *Richard II.* III. 2. 116 (Glossary).

*the thane of Cawdor*. How gracious the mention here of Macbeth's new title, how poignant the "irony"! And the "irony" too of that "to-night" (24).

22. *purveyor*, forerunner; literally the officer sent on in advance to provide (F. *pourvoir*) food for the king and his retinue. Scan as three syllables.

23. *help*; see G.

26. *in compt*, under obligation to render an account; the metaphor of a steward of an estate who at the "audit"-day has to give an account of receipts and expenditure to the owner.

31. *By your leave*, permit me; explained by 28.

## Scene 7.

*Enter a Sewer*; see *sewer* in the Glossary.

1—28. This famous and most difficult speech should be analysed closely. It reveals a medley of emotions in Macbeth's heart: first, fear of the material consequences of the murder (1—12); then, worthier feelings—the sense of kinship, loyalty, regard for the

hallowed obligations of hospitality (12—16); then, admiration of Duncan's personal qualities (16—18), the thought of which quickly brings Macbeth back to his first feeling of fear, since so noble a man as the king will not fall unwept—nor unavenged (18—25). Note how the practical considerations preponderate over the nobler motives such as an active conscience would suggest.

It is his looking forward that mainly differentiates Macbeth's attitude towards the murder from Lady Macbeth's. She dismisses the after-effects from her thought; her gaze is focussed on the immediate present with its signal chance of Macbeth's attainment of the crown. For her, all that he sums up in "the consequence" has no terror, nay, no existence; for her, it is lost in the dazzling glitter of the crown: but his imagination explores the gloom behind and shrinks at the spectres that hover there in incalculable menace.

Another point of contrast is that while his strength is dissipated in the conflict of emotions (1—28), hers is concentrated on a single purpose, and she "resolutely represses all that is inconsistent with that purpose"—*Dowden*. Cf. I. 5. 38—48.

1. *If it were done* etc. Let us try to paraphrase these lines (1—7), in a somewhat expanded form (borrowing freely from others):

'If the deed were done with when once it is executed, then the sooner it were executed the better. If the act of murder could catch in its toils (and so arrest) the evil results of murder, and thus in the moment of its completion secure successfully its object; so that just this blow might be the one thing necessary to do and the absolute conclusion of the matter in this life—just in this life, I say, this narrow bank in the mighty ocean of eternity; why, then, we would hazard the life to come with all its possibilities of punishment, and do the deed.'

The use of *done* in two senses is quite in Shakespeare's manner. Our text is substantially that of the 1st Folio. See some further remarks on p. 254.

3. *trammel up*. Schmidt says: "either to tie up or to net up (a trammel being both a kind of long net and a contrivance used for regulating the motions of a horse)." Probably 'to net up, to enmesh'; the notion being, I think, that the consequence of the deed should be captured in the doing and so not escape to "plague" (10) the doer afterwards. See G.

4. *his, its*; referring, surely, to "assassination," not "consequence"; for the "consequence" cannot "cease" if it never begins to operate, and what Macbeth wishes is that the "consequence" might be arrested

in the very doing of the deed and thus *not* begin: its birth is in the murder, and it is to be strangled at birth. Certainly, *his* does not allude to the unmentioned Duncan. *surcease*, cessation, conclusion; see G.

*success*, real attainment of one's purpose; it is not real success, he means; to do just the deed but afterwards be "plagued" with the consequence.

*that*; probably 'so that,' as in 25; but it might be a second conditional sentence dependent on *if* in 2, as Shakespeare often uses *if that*. Abruptness well suggests broken meditations.

6. *But here*, only here. The line implies, 'all I ask is safety in this world—not much to ask, seeing how short our time here is.'

*shoal*. The 1st Folio has *school*. The emendation *shoal* is one of those inspirations which have placed Theobald ("the Porson of Shakespearian scholarship") beyond all rivalry and praise as a textual critic; it is worthy to be mentioned beside his great masterpiece in *Henry V.* II. 3. 17, 18 ("a' babbled of green fields"). It gives us one of the finest of images—the likening of "our little life" to "an isthmus between two eternities": an image that reminds us of Wordsworth's "immortal sea" (*Ode on Intimations*, IX.). Quite possibly, *school* was simply an Elizabethan spelling of *shoal*.

The Folio's reading *school*, taken in its ordinary sense, has been defended thus: "*Bank* is used for *school-bench*, and *time* for *mortal life*; which, qualified as *a bench and school of instruction*, is placed in antithesis to *the life to come*. Here the idea of calling this life *the school of eternity*, as preparing man for the part he is to perform there, is not only thoroughly in accordance with the truthful genius of Shakespeare, but it is beautifully sustained in the expressions that follow it, 'that we but *teach bloody instructions*.' The feeling expressed is this: 'If here only, upon this bench of instruction, in this school of eternity, I could do this without bringing these, my pupil days, under suffering, I would hazard its effect on the endless life to come'"—*Elwin*. (F.)

This image, however, is not only vastly inferior to the other, it is inconsistent with Macbeth's disregard of the future life. A man who speaks solemnly of this life as a preparation for the next life would not naturally go on to say that he will take his chance of the next life. Nor does Shakespeare ever use *bank* = 'bench' (as in a 'bank of rowers'), whereas he uses it several times of the sea-shore, e.g. in *Sonnet* 56, 1 *Henry IV.* III. 1. 45. The *New E. Dict.* does not give a single instance of *bank* being used with the idea 'school-bench.' And *upon*, while it goes naturally with *shoal*, certainly does not fit *school*.

7. *jump*, hazard. Cf. *Cymbeline*, v. 4. 188: "You must either be directed...or jump the after inquiry on your own peril." From the literal sense 'to skip over' comes the figurative sense 'to pass lightly over,' hence 'to disregard, to chance, to risk.' Cf. the noun in *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. 8. 6, "our fortune lies Upon this jump" (i.e. stake, hazard).

. *the life to come*; contrast Hamlet's speculations on the "something after death" (III. 1. 64—82).

8. *We...have judgment here*, judgment on our deeds awaits us in this world. *still*, ever, always. *that*, so that.

8—10. *we but teach*; "we teach others to do as we have done, and are punished by our own example"—*Johnson*. For the whole sentiment Mr Cunliffe, in his valuable study of the relation of Elizabethan drama to Seneca, quotes Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, 739, 740:

"quod quisque fecit patitur: auctorem scelus  
repetit suoque premitur exemplo nocens."

10. *this*; a rather tempting change is *thus*.

11. *Commends*, offers. The 1st Folio has *ingredience*, which seems a possible form = 'mixture.' (F.)

Note that Holinshed uses the same figure in describing Macbeth's fears afterwards; see **Extract 12**. Shakespeare's audience would remember that it was through "the poison'd cup" prepared for Hamlet that the Queen died (*Hamlet*, v. 2. 303—321).

14. *Strong both*, i.e. two strong reasons, viz. kinship and loyalty.

17. *faculties*, powers, prerogatives of office. The essential idea of *faculty* is 'power of doing' (Lat. *facere*, 'to do'); and a common meaning formerly was 'power, liberty, right of doing, prerogative'—as here. Dr Murray quotes Carte's *History of England* (1752): Cardinal "Pole...laid aside the marks of his legatine authority and abstained from the exercise of his faculties," i.e. his powers as Papal Legate. From this sense of *faculty* comes the ecclesiastical sense 'a dispensation, licence'; cf. the term "Court of *Faculties*," i.e. a court with power to grant certain licences and permissions.

18. *clear*, i.e. of guilt; spotless, blameless; cf. "a clear life" in *The Tempest*, III. 3. 82, and the quotation from *Lycidas* on p. 124.

20. *taking-off*, removal, i.e. murder; cf. III. 1. 105, v. 8. 71. So in *King Lear*, v. 1. 64, 65:

"Let her who would be rid of him devise  
His speedy taking off."

The euphemism is very characteristic of Macbeth, and appropriate to



the moment; for as he thinks of the king's goodness he cannot, even to himself, speak plainly of the deed as one who faces his schemes unflinching.

21—24. A German critic says: "In this fearful vision all the consequences of Duncan's murder are grouped together; what the drama has hitherto portrayed in chiaroscuro is here unfolded in clearer treatment: it is not in the mouth of every character that the poet would dare to put such wild, extravagant, phantasmagoric images; they are reserved for the hero, with his nervous temperament, at a moment of the highest tension, when at a glance he scans a horrible future. Shakespeare's images have something peculiarly sudden and emotional;...while on the other hand the metaphors of the Greeks and of Goethe rise calmly like the sun, and disclose feature after feature of the landscape in sharp, clear outline. This is epic; the Greek tragedians have undoubtedly something of Shakespeare's impassioned, unearthly glow, but cooled in a plastic mould of feeling." (F.)

21. Pity, personified, is compared with an object typically suggestive of sympathy and compassionate feelings.

22. *cherubin*; so the 1st Folio, and I think the form should be retained as a *plural* (which the context requires). True, elsewhere in Shakespeare 'cherubin' is the singular and 'cherubins' the plural form. But in this line euphony precludes 'cherubins,' while the correct plural 'cherubim' does not occur anywhere in the Folio and was probably not known to Shakespeare—indeed, I doubt whether it was in Elizabethan use at all. For the incorrect use of 'cherubin' as a plural cf. the *Te Deum*. There was exactly the same uncertainty about the plural of *seraph*: neither word was properly naturalised in English, and writers simply followed the variant forms used in the old translations of the Bible from Wyclif onward. See G.; also p. 254.

The general conception here of the cherubim is due to passages in Scripture such as *Psalms* xviii.

23. *the...couriers of the air*, i.e. the winds. Cf. *Cymbeline*, III. 4. 38, where it is said that the "breath" of slander "Rides on the posting winds." *sightless*; cf. I. 5. 47.

24. *blow...in every eye*; and so cause it to fill with tears.

25. *tears shall drown the wind*; rain often follows the fall of the wind. "This image of a shower of tears, in which the storm of passion expends itself, is very common in Shakespeare." Cf. *Lucrece*, 1790, "At last it rains, and busy winds give o'er," where *rain*='tears' and *winds*='sighs.' (F.)

25—28. *I have no spur* etc. Malone's note is convincingly right: "There are two distinct metaphors. 'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent; I have nothing to *stimulate* me to the execution of my purpose but ambition, *which is apt to overreach itself*';...the second image [is that] of a person meaning to vault into his saddle, who, by taking too great a leap, falls on the other side."

Macbeth means that he has absolutely no motive other than sheer ambition for murdering Duncan. He can plead neither personal, private grievances, nor public, patriotic duty (the usual plea of regicides, e.g. of Brutus in *Julius Cæsar*). For Duncan has lavished honours on Macbeth—so lately—and been an irreproachable king, "clear in his great office."

Observe how the first metaphor leads to the second; there is no real "confusion"; we merely see the horseman first in one position, then in another. Swift transition from one piece of imagery to another is one of the great characteristics of Shakespeare's mature style. In the early plays he will often take a single metaphor and keep to it; and a metaphor worked out in detail is apt to obscure or lose the original point of the comparison.

For the metaphor in "spur" cf. *Lycidas*, 70—72 :

"Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights, and live laborious days."

27. *o'erleaps itself*. The phrase is just as clear and expressive as 'to overreach oneself': yet "the blind fury" of emendation would substitute *its sell* = 'its saddle' (F. *selle*), though Shakespeare does not use *sell* (an archaic Spenserian word) in any other place, and probably never in his life wrote *its*.

28. *on the other*, i.e. side. The insertion of *side* is not merely needless, but plainly wrong. It is omitted because the word has occurred in 26, and is still present to the speaker's eye of imagination. Its repetition would sound awkward, and is not essential to the meaning, because on the stage a gesture by the actor would make the point quite clear. Nor again does the metre require *side*, because Lady Macbeth's entrance accounts for the omission of a stressed syllable. Indeed, metrically the omission is an advantage, since it gives the impression that Macbeth breaks off and turns swiftly to question his wife. Metre, therefore, and sound are both against the insertion of *side*, nor does the sense require it when a gesture puts all clear.

32. *bought*, won, acquired.

34. *would*, should.

35—39. The passage plainly refers to a period antecedent to the commencement of the play. It is a proof, therefore, that Macbeth had contemplated the crime before he met the Witches. Their salutations only blew the sparks of ambition into a blaze.

36. *dress'd*; carrying on the metaphor suggested in 34.

37. *green*, i.e. with the after-effects of intoxication (35). *pale*, i.e. with fear.

39. *Such*, i.e. as valueless, because as fickle and inconstant as your conduct in this matter.

39—45. Compare carefully with I. 5. 13—23. *afear'd*; see G.

41—44. Steevens paraphrases: "Do you wish to obtain the crown, and yet would you remain such a coward in your own eyes all your life as to let your paltry fears, which whisper 'I dare not,' control your noble ambition, which cries out 'I would'?" (F.)

45. *the...cat i' the adage*. Editors quote various versions of the proverb referred to, e.g. *catus amat pisces sed non vult tingere plantas*; and *Le chat aime le poisson, mais il n'aime pas à mouiller la patte*; and the old English form as given in Heywood's *Proverbs* (1566), "The cate would eate fishe, and would not wet her feete." (F.) The "pensive Selima" of Gray's poem was less cautious than her kind.

Well might Lady Macbeth say (I. 5. 25) that she would "chastise" Macbeth with her *scorpion-tongue* into doing the deed. Woman's instinct tells her where he is most assailable. He is a brave soldier, nay, more—conspicuously brave even for a soldier (I. 2. 16, 19, 54)—and she taunts him with cowardice. He is devoted to her, and she flouts his love. He has "sworn to it" (58, 59), and she holds him to his oath. Hardest to bear of all, she compares him with herself (54—59). There is no attempt now to lure him onward by working on his ambition, she goads him into the deed. It has been well said that Lady Macbeth is to him a fourth and worse Witch, within his castle.

46. *do*; Rowe's correction of the 1st Folio's impossible reading *no*. Some retain *no* but assign 47 altogether to Lady Macbeth. Johnson notes that Shakespeare gives us in a line and a half (46, 47) the distinction between true and false courage.

47. *beast*; in obvious antithesis to "man" (46); note how she harps on his words mockingly in 49 and 51. Her retort is as fair as it is effective. Macbeth claims that he has the courage to do anything befitting "a man," and says that anyone who dares do

more is *no man*: yet he is unwilling now to do the deed which he himself proposed to her: clearly, then, if his claim to courage is just—if he does not hang back from cowardice—he cannot have been himself “a man,” when he first suggested the design to her: something must have possessed him, and that something she characterises as a “beast”—the common antithesis to “man.”

The point is lost in *boast*, one of the needless changes which only serve to perplex the text. Besides, *boast* could not mean ‘boastful spirit,’ nor is there anything ‘boastful’ about Macbeth.

48. *break*, impart, disclose; commonly ‘to break *with*,’ as in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III. 1. 59, “I am to break with thee of some affairs,” i.e. have some matters to tell you about.

50. *to be*, by being.

52. *adhere*, favour (i.e. agree with their plan).

54, 55. These lines and the reference to her father (II. 2. 13, 14) are the chief indications of that gentler side of her character which makes Macbeth address her in endearing terms (I. 5. 56; III. 2. 45).

56, 57. Coleridge commented on the error of considering these lines as a proof of “a merciless and unwomanly nature.” She is enforcing the solemnity of Macbeth’s oath (58, 59), and saying that rather than break such a pledge *she* would have done that which was most revolting to her feelings: “had she regarded the act with savage indifference, there would have been no force in her appeal.”

59. *If we should fail?* Driven from one position, he takes refuge in another and weaker.

*We fail!* Her famous retort may be rendered in three ways (with punctuation to correspond): (1) disdainfully, in contemptuous dismissal of the very notion of failure—the stress laid on *we*: (2) interrogatively, in utter surprise at the notion—the stress laid on *fail*: (3) composedly, without emphasis, in cool acceptance of the possibility. The respective punctuations obviously are: (1) “We fail!” (2) “We fail?” (3) “We fail.”

Probably (1) is correct; it is more in harmony with the general tenour of her bearing towards Macbeth in this interview. The second (2) is favoured by the 1st Folio, which has the note of interrogation; but it seems that the two stops ! and ? are often interchanged in the Folio. The third rendering (3), which stands apart from the other two, is very effective as a sort of challenge or implied reprimand: ‘if we fail? well, we do, and must take the consequences—or are you going to show the white feather in fear of those consequences?’ It is an

echo of her former sneer at his cowardice, and there would perhaps be a *faint* inflection of contempt in the speaker's voice. But on the whole, it is not likely that Lady Macbeth would admit the possibility of failure, knowing that he wants to catch at any excuse for escape. She is driving him into an *impasse* from which there is no outlet—save the one.

It is recorded that Mrs Siddons adopted the third of these renderings, "modulating her voice to a deep, low, resolute tone, which settled the issue at once—as though she had said, 'If we fail, why then we fail, and all is over.' This is consistent with the dark fatalism of the character, and the sense of the line following—and the effect was sublime, almost awful." (F.)

60. *screw...sticking-place*. Steevens says: "A metaphor perhaps taken from the *screwing up* the chords of string-instruments to their proper degree of tension, when the peg remains fast in its *sticking-place*, i.e. in the place from which it is not to move. Thus, perhaps, in *Twelfth Night*, v. 1. 125, 126:

'And that I partly know the instrument  
That screws me from my true place in your favour.'

The "instrument" was called a "wrest"; cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3. 23.

63. *his two chamberlains*; see **Extract 7** from Holinshed.

64. *wassail*, carousing, revelling; see G. *convince*, overpower, overcome; from the literal meaning of Lat. *convincere*, 'to overcome' (Lat. *con*, implying 'wholly' + *vincere*, 'to conquer'). Cf. IV. 3. 137. Dr Murray quotes Hall's *Chronicle* (1548): "The Englishmen...with all their wittes studied bothe how to repulse and convince their enemies." Now, *convince* is limited to overcoming in argument.

65—67. Two ideas are present to her: they shall not remember what happens—indeed, they shall not understand it at the time. Perhaps "memory" is called "the warder of the brain," i.e. its guard, keeper, because it keeps the secrets of the brain. Some, however, think that it is pictured as a sentinel or outpost because it was supposed to be the outer section of the brain and therefore first exposed to the influences of the body, such as the "fumes" (66).

Shakespeare has in view (as editors explain) the old anatomical theory of the brain being divided into three ventricles or sections, in each of which certain functions are discharged: thus "reason" understands, and "memory" retains the impression of, an incident. Here the notion is that the fumes of intoxication first overpower the

“memory,” the lowest-placed of the three sections, and then are drained up as through an alembic into the receptacle (“receipt”) of “reason” and overcome it also. (F.)

Dr Murray’s definition of an *alembic* will help to a clearer understanding of the process:

“An apparatus formerly used in distilling, consisting of a *cucurbit* or gourd-shaped vessel containing the substance to be distilled, surmounted by the *head* or *cap*, or *alembic* proper, the beak of which conveyed the vaporous products to a *receiver*, in which they were condensed. It is now superseded by the *retort* and *worm-still*.”

66. *fume*. Milton uses the word several times of the harmful vapours generated by food or drink—e.g. in speaking of the forbidden Fruit (*Paradise Lost*, IX. 1050) and of wine; cf. *Samson Agonistes*, 551, 552, where Samson says that he had never envied those men

“the grape

Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.”

The converse idea of “temperate vapours bland” is seen in *Paradise Lost*, v. 4, 5.

*the receipt of reason*. One is reminded of Milton’s picture of Reason inhabiting “her private cell,” apart from the lesser faculties, such as Fancy—*Paradise Lost*, v. 102—109.

67. *limbeck*; see G.

70. *unguarded*; see **Extract 5** (last sentence).

71. *spongy*; strictly active, ‘imbibing as readily as a sponge’; but here perhaps passive, ‘drenched, full of liquor as a soaked sponge.’

72. *quell*, murder; see G.

73. *mettle*; see G.

74—77. So completely has she won him over (and how in the moment of her triumph her inmost soul must despise him!) that he in his turn suggests details of the plot.

78. *As*, seeing how.

79. *bend up*. Cf. *Henry V.* III. I. 15—17, where Henry is cheering on his men to the assault of Harfleur:

“Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,  
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit  
To his full height.”

The metaphor in either passage is from stringing a bow.

81. *the time*, those about us; cf. I. 5, 61, 62. Does he know that he is but giving her back her own advice? and is it not a sort of symbol of their relative positions?

## ACT II.

## Scene 1.

The scene of the action is not in the Hall (III. 4), "for Banquo sees the sky; it is not far from the bedchamber, as the conversation shows: it must be in the inner court of the castle, which Banquo might properly cross in his way to bed"—*Johnson*. (F.)

The introduction here of Banquo serves to indicate the time, and gives us a final glimpse of the king, gracious to the last (13—16). Retrospectively, Banquo's account (13—16) covers, as regards Duncan, the interval occupied by the last scene.

4. *husbandry*, thrift, economy; see G.

5. Shakespeare compares the stars with candles more than once; cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, III. 5. 9, "Night's candles are burnt out," and *The Merchant of Venice*, v. 220, "For, by these blessed candles of the night." Marlowe is fond of terming them "the lamps of heaven"; 2 *Tamburlaine*, II. 4. 18; III. 4. 77; v. 3. 3. See I. 5. 51, note.

*Take thee that too*; handing him something else, e.g. his shield.

13—17. See **Extract 6**. Note that Shakespeare makes the wife, not the husband (as Holinshed mentions), the recipient of a gift; the change intensifies the "irony," since she (as we know) has proved herself Duncan's deadlier foe. Indeed, it is all "irony" (13—17)—Duncan's "unusual pleasure," his present "measureless content," his graciousness.

14. *offices*; the servants' part of a house, on the ground-floor, at the back, such as kitchen, pantry, store-rooms, cellar; still used thus.

In *Richard II.* I. 2. 67—69, the widowed Duchess of York, speaking of her deserted home at Plashy, says:

"Alack, and what shall good old York there see  
But empty lodgings and unfurnish'd walls,  
Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones?"

Here *to your offices* might be rendered colloquially 'to the servants' hall' (i.e. to the servants). The change *officers* is pointless. "'*Largess*' was given to servants, not to 'officers.'" F. *largesse*, 'bounty'; from Lat. *largiri*, 'to bestow.'

16. *and shut up*. I think that we should supply *is*: 'and he is lapped in a sense of boundless satisfaction,' 'feels himself completely surrounded with all that makes for content.' Some, however, take *shut*

as a preterite, meaning either 'concluded the evening,' or simply 'shut himself up, retired to rest.'

17—19. A laboured apology for his inadequate reception of the king. Macbeth's will, which would have had free play if he had known sooner of Duncan's coming, was limited by deficiencies that under the circumstances could not be helped.

23. *We*. "Perhaps an involuntary anticipation of the kingly 'we.' Macbeth's acting is, at this stage, far inferior to his wife's"—*Herford*.

25. *cleave to my consent*. I think that *my consent* simply means 'agreement with me.' It is a vague phrase; "but the use of a more explicit word would have betrayed him." What he really means is: 'if you will support me at the critical moment.'

Some interpret 'if you shall hold to what I consent to do'; others, 'if you will tie yourself to my fortunes and counsel.'

*when 'tis*. We cannot refer *it* to any particular noun. For Banquo the pronoun probably means "leisure" (24) = 'when we can find time to meet and talk the matter over'; for Macbeth, the event, the thing (i.e. Duncan's murder) = 'when the event takes place.' An indefinite phrase like 'at the time,' 'at that moment,' conveys roughly the double sense. Some refer *'t* to "business" (23), which seems rather too far off.

26. *So*, provided that, on condition that.

28. *franchised*, free (i.e. from guilt). *clear*; cf. I. 7. 18.

31. *drink*; the night-cup or posset (II. 2. 6).

32. *strike upon the bell*; the preconcerted signal; cf. 61.

33—49. The passage is a study in progressive hallucination; from the uncertainty of "Is this a dagger?" to particularisation of details (46, 47). His fantastic and horrible imaginings are the outlet of a perturbation which touches the borderland of sheer insanity.

36. *sensible To*, perceptible by. The primary sense of the word is 'perceptible through the bodily organs'; F. *sensible*, Lat. *sensibilis*. The *Cent. Dict.* quotes *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV. 2:

"Return, fair soul, from darkness, and lead mine  
Out of this sensible hell."

39. *the heat-oppressed brain*; the same idea of 'feverishly excited' as in "Lovers and madmen have such seething brains," *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. 4. So in *The Tempest*, v. 59, 60 ("cure thy brains ...boil'd within thy skull").

40. *palpable*; Lat. *palpabilis*, 'that may be felt'; *palpare*, 'to feel, handle.'



41. "Macbeth may be supposed to draw his dagger after this short line"—*Abbott*.

44, 45. *made the fools o'*. The common sense of this phrase is 'deceived by, made the dupe of,' but here the meaning must be 'are ridiculed by.' Macbeth's "eyes" tell him that the dagger is real, his "other senses," e.g. touch (36, 37), tell him that it is not real: if the "eyes" are right, they are obviously "worth all the rest": if the eyes are wrong, then the laugh is with "the other senses," which deny the reality of the dagger and thereby ridicule the eyes. To render *made the fools o'* by 'befooled' is quite misleading, for 'befooled' implies 'duped,' and the eyes are not 'duped' but flatly contradicted by the other senses.

46. *dudgeon*, haft; in Shakespeare's time a common word, especially in Scotland, for the handle of a dagger; generally, made of box-wood for its hardness. Middle E. *dogeon*, the etymology of which is unknown.

*gouts*, thick drops. *Gout* (F. *goutte*, Lat. *gutta*, 'a drop') means properly any 'drop of liquid,' but now is used especially of blood, implying 'a large drop, a clot.'

48, 49. *informs Thus to*, takes this form before; or perhaps 'creates this vision before.'

49, 50. i.e. "over our hemisphere all action and motion seem to have ceased"—*Johnson*.

51. Scan either "The cú|rain'd slé|ep; witch|craft cé|ebrates"; or "The cú|rain'd sléep; | - witch|craft cé|ebrates." It is equally in accordance with Shakespeare's practice to take *sleep* as prolonged into two syllables, like *feel* in 1. 5. 55, or to regard the third foot as an instance of the omission of an unstressed syllable for which the medial pause compensates. Changes such as *sleeper* or the insertion of *now* or *while* date from the time when the principles of Shakespearian blank verse were imperfectly understood and the aim of metrical criticism was to tone down all apparent irregularities and normalise everything. But a line like 51 is now seen to be just as Shakespearian as a so-called "iambic pentameter" like 35.

Editors compare *Comus*, 553, 554, where with an obvious recollection of this line and of 2 *Henry VI.* IV. 1. 3-6, Milton speaks (if we may follow the Cambridge MS.) of

"the drowsy-flighted steeds

That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep.'

We may infer from this imitation what Milton would have thought of

the substitution of *sleep* for the beautiful personification *sleep*—in a passage, too, where personification (“witchcraft” ... “murder”) is supreme.

52. *Hecate's*. The scansion of the name as two syllables = *Hecat'* is very common in poetry, indeed invariable in Shakespeare except in a doubtful part of 1 *Henry VI.* (III. 2. 64). Cf. III. 2. 41, III. 5. 1; and *King Lear*, I. 1. 112, “The mysteries of Hecat', and the night.” So in *Comus*, 135: Byron, *Childe Harold*, II. 22, “Alike beheld beneath *pale Hecat's* blaze.”

52. *wither'd*, ghastly, spectre-like; cf. “like a ghost,” 56.

53. *Alarum'd*, summoned to his work; see *alarm* in G.

54. *his watch*, i.e. murder's means of telling how the night is going; as though murder, from his affinity to the wolf, could judge from the wolf's howl what the hour was; cf. “his sentinel.”

55. *strides*; the 1st Folio has *sides*; most editors adopt Pope's correction, *strides*. There are several undoubted errors in the Folio's text of these lines; cf. 56, 57. The general reference is to the story of Sextus Tarquinius, told in Shakespeare's early poem of *Lucrece*.

56, 57. *sure*; Pope's certain correction of the 1st Folio's *sowre*. In the next line *which way they* seems an equally certain correction of the Folio's *which they may*. The form of expression in 57 is like “I know thee who thou art.”

58. Editors note the reference to *Luke* xix. 40: “if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”

59. *take the present horror*, i.e. by breaking the awful silence which increases so much the horror of the moment.

60. *it*, the “time” (59), or possibly the deed; certainly not the place (“whereabout,” 58).

61. *too cold breath gives*, chills: in talking about a deed one's ardour for it often cools: “strike while the iron is hot.” Like Hamlet, Macbeth, if he is to act against his inclination, must act on impulse. It is one of the points of unlikeness between him and his wife that “he is never able to pursue a deliberate course coolly.” He is too “infirm of purpose” (52); swayed by sudden scruples or fears, and totally incapable of bearing suspense.

*gives*; the form, whether singular or plural, is plainly due to the rhyme. The 1st Folio has many similar cases, without rhyme, of an apparently singular verb after a plural subject; but for the most part, being unrhymed, they have been silently changed by editors. We may either (1) regard *gives* as singular and explain the anomaly “words...

gives" by the theory that the verb is attached to the *sense* = 'speech' or to the nearer noun "breath"; or (2) if we ever accept the theory of the "northern plural" in *s*, we may certainly accept it here. This in fact is a test-case, and raises point-blank the whole question of the survival in Shakespearian English of the three plural inflexions *es* or *s*, *eth* and *en*. Personally I think that *gives* does represent the old plural; but apparently most editors dismiss Shakespeare's alleged use of the northern *s* as a philological fiction.

63. *knell*; "alluding to the passing-bell, which was formerly tolled as the person was dying"—*Elwin*. The rhyme of this couplet marks the close not merely of the scene, but of Duncan's life. It has the effect of an epitaph; so in *Richard II.* II. 4. 21—24, where Salisbury is speaking of Richard's hopeless cause:

"Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,  
Witnessing storms to come, woe and unrest:  
Thy friends are fled to wait upon thy foes,  
And crossly to thy good all fortune goes."

There the peculiar elegiac effect of the lines makes them an epitaph on Richard's fallen greatness.

## Scene 2.

"The scene is written with a pen of fire, and we seem eye-witnesses of the deed of death, though it is transacted off the stage"—*Boas*.

And how appalling are the accessories of horror: the strange sounds and voices unaccounted for; the hoot of the owl without and cry of the crickets within, as if all nature were conscious of the crime; the sleeping servants—for sleep is a mystery, as of an intermediate state 'twixt life and death; and the unconscious alarm of Duncan's sons in the adjoining chamber (19—30).

The "note" of the whole tragedy is Terror, and in this scene Terror reaches its climax.

3. *the fatal bellman*. "The owl, as a bird of ill omen, is compared to the 'bellman' sent to condemned persons the night before they suffer. Webster imitated this in *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV. 2:—

'Hark now everything is still  
The screech-owl and the whistler shrill  
Call upon our dame aloud,  
And bid her quickly don her shroud'—*Herford*.

The bellman corresponded to the linkman of the 18th century.

Cotgrave (1611) defines his main duty: "Resveilleur. An awaker; and particularly, a common Bellman, which in the dead of night goes round about a City, tinkling, and telling of the houres"; calling out the weather, and anon uttering those "drowsy charms" at which Milton glances in *Il Penseroso*, 83, 84. Cf. Herrick's poems on "The Bellman" in the *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers* (Grosart's *Herrick*, II. 28. 102, 174).

4. *it*; even she shrinks from specifying the deed.

5. *grooms*, servants; see G.

6. *possets*. An old book on heraldry, *The Academy of Armour* (1688), describes a *posset* as "hot milk poured on ale or sack [light wine], having sugar, grated bisket, and eggs, with other ingredients, boiled in it, which all goes to a curd." One of the madmen in *The Duchess of Malfi* says (IV. 2): "Get me three hundred milchbats, to make possets to procure sleep." See G.

9. *Who's there? what, ho!* Macbeth makes this exclamation at the "noise" he afterwards mentions (15), as he is returning (17) from Duncan's chamber. It is to this exclamation that she refers (17), though some editors think that the question "Did not you speak?" really belongs to Macbeth.

11. *the attempt and not the deed*, i.e. an unsuccessful attempt, contrasted with a successful execution of the work.

12. *Confounds*, ruins; a stronger word in Elizabethan E. (often = 'to destroy utterly, to ruin').

13, 14. *Had he not resembled* etc. Dramatically some revelation (as here and in I. 7. 54, 55) of her better and gentler nature from which she had deliberately (cf. I. 5. 38—52) cut herself off—some hint of her sensibilities, of "the eternal feminine" in her—is necessary to the working out of the ultimate Nemesis. Without these hints of the other Lady Macbeth in her we should regard her as another Goneril, kin with "Gorgons and hydras and chimæras dire"; and no inner retribution would have been possible.

14. *My husband!* in contrast to "my father": one of those contrasts which are so significant from their unconsciousness. It is (if I am not mistaken) the only place where she addresses Macbeth thus. Is there not, in the light of this fact, some peculiar meaning in her use of "husband" at such a moment? It seems to me to reveal how she lives in and for him alone, and has done it for him; and how the momentary tenderness ("my father") shrivels up in the flame of ambition for her husband.

16. *I heard...the crickets cry*; proverbially a sign of death. So Webster, in a passage obviously reminiscent of *Macbeth*, makes his heroine in *The White Devil*, v. 4, say:

“When the screech-owls croak upon the chimney tops,  
And the strange cricket i’ the oven sings and hops,  
Be certain then you of a corse shall hear.”

21. Here again (cf. II. I. 41) the action shown in the stage-directions accounts for the short line.

23. *one did*; for the omission of the relative cf. I. 5. 18.

24. *that*, so that.

28, 29. *As*, as if. *hangman*, executioner. Some editors put a comma at the end of 28 and the full-stop in the middle of 29. Our text is substantially the 1st Folio’s; it seems to me that “Listening their fear” goes equally well with what follows. For *listen* cf. *Julius Cæsar*, IV. I. 41, “Listen great things”=‘hear important news,’ and v. 5. 15, “list a word.”

33. *thought*, i.e. thought *on*; but there is no need to add the *on*.

34. *it will make us mad*. This, like line 67, is one of those utterances to which after-events lend a dreadful significance and irony: unmarked perhaps at the time, they recur to one’s memory later. What a comment on lines 34 and 67 is the first scene of Act v.!

35—43. A reminiscence probably of a passage in Holinshed; see **Extract 28**.

36. The marks of quotation should undoubtedly be placed, as by most modern editors, after the third foot. The incongruity of attributing the other lines (such lines!) as far as “feast” to a supernatural voice scarcely needs comment. The *description* of sleep (“the innocent sleep...life’s feast”) is of the very texture of Macbeth’s own emotional eloquence; cf. 60—63.

37. *the ravel’d sleeve*, the tangled skein. The 1st Folio has *sleeve*, which almost all scholars regard as a mis-spelling of *sleave*=*sleave-silk*, i.e. soft floss silk; silk in a raw, coarse, unwrought state. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, v. I. 35, “thou idle immaterial skein of sleeve-silk,” where the original editions have similar mis-spellings, e.g. *sleive*. (F.) See *ravel* and *sleave* in G.

38. *death*. Warburton coolly “made no question but Shakespeare wrote *birth*”; which provoked the retort: “Warburton, though a clergyman, forgot, what Shakespeare did not forget, that in death the weary are at rest.” (F.)

39. *second course*; the metaphor is shown by the next line.

55. Editors note the imitation in Webster's tragedy *The White Devil* (1612): "Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils." Webster's gloomy genius was greatly influenced by Shakespeare's tragedies. Thus in this play, *The White Devil*, one of the characters "feigns a mad humour" (III. 1) like Hamlet's. *The Duchess of Malfi*, perhaps the most remarkable achievement of Jacobean tragedy, has more than one reminiscence of Shakespeare. Cf. 3, 16, notes.

56. *gild*. Nares says: "Though there is no real resemblance between the colour of blood and that of gold, it is certain that *to gild with blood* was an expression not uncommon in the 16th century; and other phrases are found which have reference to the same comparison. At this we shall not be surprised, if we recollect that gold was popularly and very generally styled *red*. So we have 'golden blood' II. 3. 95. So in *King John*, II. 1. 316:

'Their armours, that march'd hence so *silver-bright*,  
Hither return all *gilt* with Frenchmen's *blood*.'

*Gilt* or *gilded* was also a current expression for 'drunk,' as in *The Tempest*, v. 280." We may remember that the grooms are drunk. (F.)

57. *guilt*. The quibble on *gild* and *guilt* occurs in *2 Henry IV*. IV. 5. 129, 130, where the sick king says bitterly that his prodigal son ("England") when *he* comes to the throne will welcome every "ruffian" to court and reward him:

"England shall double gild his treble guilt,  
England shall give him office, honour, might."

So also in *Henry V*. ProL. II. 26, in the reference to the traitors who

"Have, for the gilt of France—O guilt indeed!—  
Confirm'd conspiracy with fearful France."

In each case the context of the quibble *gild* (or *gilt*) and *guilt* is tragic.

Here Lady Macbeth's jest, "hideous in the self-violence which it implies" in undertaking the awful task, hideous also from our point of view in its contrast with the horror of the moment, serves as a measure of her tempestuous feelings and of the difference between her and Macbeth (contrast the spirit and poetic quality of 60—63).

Shakespeare makes his characters jest thus in moments of great emotion—especially bitterness or horror—as a relief to the feelings. The dying Gaunt, angry with Richard, puns on his own name ("Old Gaunt indeed, and *gaunt* in being old"), *Richard II*. II. 1. 73—83, just as in the *Ajax* of Sophocles the miserable Ajax (Αἴας) puns on Αἴας and ἀλάζειν, 'to cry alas!' Cf. also *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1. 281,

where Antonio, meaning that he will *gladly* pay the debt of the pound of flesh which is to be cut *near his heart*, says, "I'll pay it presently *with all my heart*." It is partly on this principle that the follies of the Jester are mingled with the terrors of *King Lear*: they give not only contrast but the relief of those smiles which are so near to tears. Cf. Hazlitt's remark: "The imagination is glad to take refuge in the half-comic, half-serious comments of the Fool, just as the mind under the extreme anguish of a surgical operation vents itself in sallies of wit." For physical "anguish" substitute mental in these cases.

61—63. This is one of those thoughts which occur naturally to many imaginations; hence it is not surprising that editors find numerous parallel passages in classical writers and elsewhere. The most striking is in the *Hippolytus* (723—726) of *Seneca*:

"quis eluet me Tanais? aut quæ barbaris  
Mæotis undis pontico incumbens mari?  
non ipse toto magnus oceano pater  
tantum expiarit sceleris."

These lines (or a very similar passage in the *Hercules Furens*, 1330—36) may well have been known to Shakespeare.

No classical writer had so great an influence on the Elizabethan tragedy as Seneca, whose "Ten Tragedies" appeared together in an English translation in 1581 (many of them having been issued separately long before, the *Hippolytus* e.g. about 1556—57). It is quite likely, indeed, that Shakespeare read some of Seneca's works in the original as a school-boy, the tragedies being a favourite school-book. But the thought here is of minor moment compared with its expression. One of the most convincing ways in which a great writer can show his greatness is by the supreme and final expression of some thought which has also occurred to other minds but found imperfect expression through them. Fifty poets may have preceded Shakespeare here, but the idea became *his* for evermore by the sheer wonder of his words. The same thing often happens with Milton, and in music with Handel.

62. *multitudinous*, innumerable and infinite. *incarnadine*, dye red; see G.

63. *Making the green one red*, turning the green into one mass of red. *Green* and *red* are both nouns—the green colour and the red colour. "The imagination of Macbeth dwells upon the conversion of the *universal green* into *one pervading red*"—*Elwin*. The only objection to this interpretation is that the 1st and two following Folios insert a comma (removed in the last Folio) after *one*, the effect

of which obviously is to detach *one* from *red* and attach it to *green*. But it is better surely to ignore a comma than to credit Shakespeare with the sense 'making the green one (i.e. *sea*) into a red one': as if Macbeth had in his mind's eye some particular sea which deserved more than other seas to be called "the green one." The sense would be ridiculous, and the sound ("the green one"!) a sheer anticlimax to the passage. Nor does it seem possible to transform *the green one* by an irregular process of hyphenating into *the green-one* and take the latter as a sort of compound = 'the green mass,' in apposition to *seas*. It is at least as lawful to cut out a comma as to coin a hyphen.

65. *Knocking within*; explained by the following scene. Here, as in the banquet-scene (III. 4), it is her indomitable self-control and alertness of brain that save them from discovery. "Lost" in a terrible reverie and left to himself, Macbeth would be "lost" indeed: whereas "she faces every crisis by sheer force of nerve"—*Moulton*.

68—70. *Your constancy* etc.; your usual courage has deserted you. *nightgown*; what we call a dressing-gown; a loose garment worn in the bed-room, not in bed; cf. v. 1. 5. (F.)

71. *watchers*, i.e. still up, awake; not gone to bed.

73. *To know my deed*. Better, he means, to be "lost in my thoughts" and so "know" neither myself nor my deed than be recalled to a consciousness of *both*: if knowing (i.e. being made fully conscious of) what I have done *is the price* of knowing what I am, it were better to remain "lost" (71).

74. *Wake Duncan with thy knocking!* addressed to the invisible knocker. Some editors would like to have it addressed to Duncan himself, and read: "Wake, Duncan, with *this* knocking." But necessity alone could justify the change; nor is the gain certain.

### Scene 3.

What may be called "the Porter's scene" (1—25) has been rejected by some critics as unauthentic. The following features stamp it, to my mind, as absolutely Shakespearian: (1) the relief it gives in relaxing the tragic tension; (2) the contrast which makes us feel in how abnormal a world of horror the action has been moving: this is brought home to us by the note of normal life which the scene re-introduces; (3) the "irony"—for Macbeth's castle *is* a hell, and the man "devil-porters" (17) without knowing it. Moreover, (4) certain phrases have an indisputably Shakespearian ring, and (5) some scene is necessary to the



structure of the play. Macbeth and his wife must have time to remove the traces of his crime; and the "knocking" was mentioned in the last scene.

The principle involved in (1) and (2) is of course essentially Shakespearian. "In an action which is cast in a uniform tone the continuity is broken by a brief spell of a contrary passion, the contrast at once relieving and intensifying the prevailing tone...[Here] this tone of broad farce, with nothing else like it in the whole play, comes as a single ray of common daylight to separate the agony of the dark night's murder from the agony of the struggle for concealment"—*Moulton*. See p. 252.

The introductory speech has the special interest of containing allusions which throw light on the date of the play. In Shakespeare's plays and in Elizabethan plays generally there is (I believe) a considerable element of what has been called "topical allusion"—allusion, that is, to topics and events of the time, literary customs, pastimes, fashions, current jokes, etc. It is generally through such characters as the Porter that this "topical" element is introduced.

2. *old*, abundant; no stint of it. For this colloquial use of *old* to give emphasis = 'plentiful, abundant, great,' cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. 4. 5, "here will be an old abusing of God's patience and the king's English." So in *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 2. 15, "We shall have old swearing," i.e. hard swearing. Somewhat similar is the slang phrase 'a high old time of it.'

4, 5. *a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty*. This is commonly thought to allude to the exceptionally abundant harvest of 1606, and the consequent lowness of the price of corn which drove the farmer to desperation.

"The price of corn was then...the great criterion of 'plenty' or scarcity. That in the summer and autumn of 1606 there was a prospect ['expectation'] of plenty of corn appears from the audit-book of the college of Eton; for the price of wheat in that year was lower than it was for thirteen years afterwards...In 1606 barley and malt were considerably cheaper than in the two years subsequent"—*Malonē*. He quotes from Hall's *Satires* an apt parallel in the description of a speculating farmer who hoards his grain in the hope of a rise of prices, "And hangs himself when corne grows cheap again." (F.)

Hunter says: "There is a story of such an event in the small tract of Peacham, entitled, *The Truth of our Times revealed out of one Man's Experience*, 1638. The farmer had hoarded hay when it was five pounds ten shillings per load, and when it unexpectedly fell to

forty and thirty shillings, he hung himself through disappointment and vexation, but was cut down by his son before he was quite dead. No doubt such stories are of all ages." (F.)

6. *napkins*, pocket-handkerchiefs; see G.

8—11. *an equivocator*; see p. 256.

9. *the scales*, of Justice.

13, 14. *an English tailor...stealing out of a French hose*; a double hit—at the tailor who skimps his cloth (yet charges his customer for the full amount), and at the English practice of aping foreign fashions. The latter is a stock subject of Elizabethan satire, and is one point of the sarcasm here. Compare Portia's jesting description of her English suitor, the young baron (*The Merchant of Venice*, I. 2. 79—81): "How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour every where." See too *Richard II.* II. I. 21—23. One of the madmen in *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV. 2, is

"an English tailor crazed i' the brain  
With the study of new fashions."

Editors show that there were two kinds of French *hose* (i.e. knee-breeches), one made very long and full (cf. "round"), the other very tight and short. It is obvious which a pilfering tailor would prefer to make.

The writer of a pamphlet entitled *The Black Year* (1606) complains that tailors not only steal "half a yard of broad cloth in making up a payre of breeches," as formerly, but "now they do largely nicke their customers in the lace too"—*Malone*. (F.)

15. *goose*, the tailor's smoothing-iron, shaped somewhat like a goose.

18, 19. The lines proclaim their Shakespearian authorship. Cf. Ophelia's reply to the advice of Laertes (*Hamlet*, I. 3. 46—51):

"But, good my brother,  
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;  
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,  
And recks not his own rede" [advice].

23. *till the second cock*; "about 3 o'clock in the morning"—*Malone*. Cf. *King Lear*, III. 4. 120, 121: "This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock."

28, 29. The time indicated here, as in 20, 21, is early morning

If we may assume that Macbeth waited till all was still in the castle, then the deed was done after 3 a.m.; cf. line 23; it was after midnight that Banquo met Macbeth in the court (II. 1). As this scene (II. 3) follows the last without any interval (cf. the "knocking"), it cannot be said that the action (Scene 2) of the play really covers the interval between the deed and daybreak. But dramatically Scene 2 gives a sufficient impression of the lapse of time; so tense, so prolonged, is the strain of it, so entralling the interest.

30. *a joyful trouble*; an instance of *oxymoron*, i.e. the close combination of antithetic words. It is a figure of speech which Milton, with his classical tastes, uses more than Shakespeare; cf. "With wanton heed and giddy cunning," *L'Allegro*, 141, and "In willing chains and sweet captivity," *Vacation Exercise*, 52.

32. *physics pain*, is a remedy for the trouble (F. *peine*) it causes. Cf. *The Tempest*, III. 1. 1, 2, for the general sentiment that pleasure and labour often go together:

"There be some sports are painful, and their labour  
Delight in them sets off";

i.e. the labour they involve heightens the pleasure they afford.

34. *limited*, appointed; it was Macduff's prescribed duty to "call" Duncan.

36. *lay*, lodged.

40. *combustion*, social conflagration; see G.

41. *New hatch'd to*, just born to the unhappy age. Of course, pedantry may object that what is already born cannot be foretold ("prophesied"), but its operations can, and the age can be warned of what is ahead: and that is all the passage means.

*hatch'd to*; so we speak of a child being 'born to' the parents.

*the obscure bird*; cf. II. 2. 3. *obscure*, living in the dark; that loves the night. The owl is called "the bird of night" in *Julius Cæsar*, I. 3. 26.

Scan *obscure*, as in *Richard II.* III. 3. 154, "A little little grave, an obscure grave." This is an illustration of the rule that in Shakespeare and Milton words like *obscure*, *extrême*, *complète*, throw the accent on to the previous syllable when they are followed immediately by an accented syllable, e.g. a monosyllable like *bird*. Cf. *Lucrece*, 230, "And *é*xtrême fear can neither fight nor fly." So in *Comus*, 421, "She that has that is clad in *c*omplète steel." But conversely "Obscure and lowly swain, King Henry's blood," 2 *Henry VI.* IV. 1. 50; and "Savage, *é*xtrême, rude, cruel, not to trust," *Sonnet* 129.

*Clamour'd*, wailed. The noun often means 'loud wailing'; cf. *Hamlet*, II. 2. 538, "The instant burst of clamour that she made."

43. *Was feverous*. This suggested the ingenious emendation *Is fev'rous* in *Julius Cæsar*, I. 3. 129 (a similar scene to this, describing the omens that preceded the death of Cæsar), where the 1st Folio has the meaningless *Is fauors*. But the better correction there is Johnson's:

"And the complexion of the element  
In favour's like the work we have in hand,  
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible";

i.e. the sky resembles in appearance etc.

Editors quote *Coriolanus*, I. 4. 60, 61:

"Thou madest thine enemies, as if the world  
Were feverous and did tremble,"

i.e. like a man stricken with ague.

46, 47. The inversion of the natural order expresses his emotion. For the double negative cf. I. 4. 30, 31.

48. *Confusion...hath made his masterpiece*, destruction (cf. III. 5. 29) has achieved his deadliest work.

50. *The Lord's anointed temple*. "A blending of two Scriptural phrases: 'the Lord's anointed' (as in *Richard III.* IV. 4. 150) and 'ye are the temple of the living God'"—*Herford*. The latter is from *2 Corinthians* vi. 16; so in *1 Cor.* iii. 16, 17. Milton with the same idea describes the chaste body as "The unpolluted temple of the mind" (*Comus*, 461).

54. *a new Gorgon*. "There were three Gorgons, but the reference is to Medusa, whose head, fixed on Minerva's shield, turned all beholders to stone"—*Herford*. Milton allegorises the legend of the *Gorgoneion* in a characteristic way (*Comus*, 447—450):

"What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield  
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,  
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congeal'd stone,  
But rigid looks of chaste austerity?"

In *Paradise Lost*, II. 611, the Medusa guards the river of Lethe "with Gorgonian terrour."

60. *The great doom's image!* a picture of the Judgment-day itself. The metaphor is continued in 61. *doom*; see G. Editors compare the last scene in *King Lear*, v. 3. 263, 264, where the old man bears in the dead Cordelia:

"Kent. Is this the promised end?  
Edgar. Or image of that horror?  
Albany. Fall, and cease!"

(The last words are probably an apostrophe to "the end" of the world to come at once and bring men's tortures to an end.)

The strong medial pause in the line (which compensates for the lack of a stressed syllable) indicates that Macduff waits a moment for their reply to his summons.

62. *To countenance*, to look with your own eyes on.

67. *repetition*, recital, narration.

75. Primarily part of his purpose to deceive by feigning grief; but in its inner meaning, for Macbeth himself, a deadly truth. He had repented the deed in the very doing, and conscience and imagination alike tell him that for him the joy and "peace" of life have perished (III. 1. 67). Here, at the outset of the new existence he expresses in a few words what he says more fully at its close (v. 5. 19—28).

*mortality*, human life and all that composes it.

76. *toys*, trifles; see G. *renown and grace is dead*; for Duncan possessed both, yet they availed him naught: why then should men trouble any more about them? His death was their death-blow.

*is*. We often find a singular verb with two singular nouns as subject, especially where the two nouns express kindred ideas and therefore make up one general idea which forms the real subject. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. 5. 168, 170, "faith and troth...bids," where 'loyal obligation' is the general idea. So in Milton's *Lycidas*, 6, 7:

"Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,  
Compels me to disturb your season due,"

i.e. 'necessity'; and in his Sonnet to Lawes, 5, "Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng," i.e. your merit as man and musician. See Abbott, p. 239.

Here *renown and grace* = goodness with the good fame it brought.

77, 78. "A metaphorical comparison of this world vaulted by the sky, and robbed of its spirit and grace, with a vault or cellar from which the wine has been taken and the dregs only left"—*Elwin*. (F.)

And the metaphor of the "drawn wine" is suggested to Macbeth by the sight from which he had just come in Duncan's chamber. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, III. 1. 262, where Antony's peculiar denunciation—"A curse shall light upon the *limbs* of men"—is unconsciously suggested to him by the sight of Cæsar's mangled body.

79. *You are*, i.e. "amiss."

91. *amazed*; a stronger word in Elizabethan English; 'distracted.'

92. *a*, one, the same.

93. *expedition*, haste.

95—99. Johnson says: "It is not improbable that Shakespeare put these forced and unnatural metaphors into the mouth of Macbeth, as a mark of artifice and dissimulation, to show the difference between the studied language of hypocrisy and the natural outcries of sudden passion. This whole speech, so considered, is a remarkable instance of judgement, as it consists entirely of antithesis and metaphor." (F.)

95. *laced*, adorned as with bands of lace. Cf. Steevens' note: "The allusion is to the decoration of the richest habits [i.e. dress] worn in the age of Shakespeare when it was usual to *lace* cloth of *silver* with *gold*, and cloth of *gold* with *silver*. The second of these fashions is mentioned in *Much Ado About Nothing*, III. iv. 19: 'cloth o' gold, and cuts, and laced with silver, set with pearls.'" (F.)

99. *breech'd*, covered; literally 'covered as with breeches.'

"A metaphor must not be far-fetched nor dwell upon the details of a disgusting picture... There is but little, and that far-fetched, similarity between *gold lace* and *blood*, or between *bloody daggers* and *breech'd legs*. The slightness of the similarity, recalling the greatness of the dissimilarity, disgusts us with the attempted comparison. Language so forced is only appropriate in the mouth of a conscious murderer dissembling guilt"—*Abbott*.

101. *Help me hence, ho!* There seems no reason to doubt the genuineness of Lady Macbeth's faint. It is an intimation of the "natural reaction of her overtaxed powers. Womanhood reasserts its rights." The second deed of bloodshed is a shock: she has not steeled herself for it as for the other; and a shock at such a moment turns the scale. Note that dramatically there is no need to credit her with feigning collapse: were Macbeth playing his part badly we should naturally assume that she was seeking to divert attention from him. But Macbeth is playing his part well: the man has the sheer physical strength for lack of which the woman breaks down; and by daylight, in the presence of danger, his imagination yields to the practical instinct of self-preservation, and he recovers self-control.

103. *argument*, subject, i.e. on which to exercise their "tongues"; Lat. *argumentum*, 'subject, theme.' Milton calls the subject of *Paradise Lost* "this great argument" (I. 24).

105. *in an auger-hole*, literally 'in a hole as small as that bored by a carpenter's auger,' i.e. in some imperceptible spot. (F.) Donalbain feels that danger surrounds them: *their* fate too may be lurking in some obscure quarter which they would never suspect.

107, 108. *Our...our*; contrasted ironically with Macbeth's and his

wife's carefully prepared outbursts. *Upon the foot of motion*, ready to manifest itself.

109, 110. They have rushed from their rooms scantily clad, and the place is cold (II. 3. 16).

111. *question*, discuss. The noun often means conversation in Shakespeare; cf. *As You Like It*, III. 4. 38, 39, "I met the duke yesterday and had much question with him." So in *King Lear*, IV. 3. 26, "Made she no verbal question?" = did she not *say* anything?

114. *the undivulg'd pretence*, the secret designs, aims; cf. II. 4. 24. Yet Banquo does nothing.

116. *manly readiness*; "the equipment and mood of battle"—*Herford*. They must be ready to "fight" against any further machinations that treason may have in store, and the first step is to "hide their naked frailties" by donning their clothes and armour.

119. *To show an unfeelt sorrow*; cf. Holinshed, **Extract 8**, 2nd paragraph.

120, 121. *to England...To Ireland*; see **Extract 10**.

123, 124. *the near in blood* etc.; the nearer to us in blood, the more likely to prove bloodthirsty (i.e. to murder them because they stand between him and the throne). Donalbain means Macbeth, their next of kin, whom they both suspect—*Steevens*.

The old comparative *near* (123) is seen in *Richard II.* v. 1. 88, "Better far off than near, be ne'er the *near*" = better be far off than *near*, yet not really *nearer* because not allowed to meet. Cf. the proverbial phrase *ne'er the near*, implying that after all you were still no *nearer* getting what you wanted. See G.

124—126. *Hath not yet lighted*, i.e. not yet reached its final mark. Naturally Malcolm, Duncan's nominated but powerless successor (I. 4. 37—39), fears that he and Donalbain, as the next heirs, will be the next victims of the murderer's designs that are afoot: and no doubt they would if they stayed.

But their flight plays into the traitor's hands: "they thus rid Macbeth of the embarrassing problem of inventing motives for the grooms' murder of Duncan; he has now only to give out that they were suborned by the fugitive princes. Accident has again befriended the Thane by at once giving plausibility to his tale and by removing his rivals. As Duncan's cousin he naturally mounts the vacant throne. 'The Witches' threefold hail is fulfilled'"—*Boas*.

## Scene 4.

This scene illustrates a very instructive feature of Shakespeare's dramatic method: his side-scenes. Take two other instances, first *Richard II.* III. 4: Coleridge said of that scene: "Shakespeare's wonderful judgment appears in his historical plays, in the introduction of some incident or other, though no way connected, yet serving to give an air of historic fact. Thus the scene of the Queen and the Gardener realizes the thing, makes the occurrence no longer a segment, but gives an individuality, a liveliness and presence." As the Gardener and Servants talk about the unhappy state of England and we hear their comments on contemporary events, those events appear much nearer to us and more vivid; we slip insensibly into the feelings of an onlooker. A somewhat similar scene is *Julius Cæsar*, II. 4, which depicts Portia, wife of Brutus, restlessly waiting to hear how the plot against Cæsar at the Capitol has gone.

Such side-scenes give us the impressions of those who are watching the course of events from a little distance, and we seem to join them as spectators: there, for instance, we cannot help feeling something of Portia's anxiety as she waits for news and suddenly thinks that she hears a sound from the direction of the Capitol.

And the same sort of effect is produced here by this scene of *Macbeth*. Hitherto we have been, as it were, amid the rush of tragic incidents; now we view them retrospectively, some way off, as when one turns to look back on a plain; we see them as they appear to the non-actors. And we learn the immediate after-effects (24—35) of the occurrences at which we have been present.

For the omens and signs see **Extract 9**, and note that they really belong to Holinshed's description of the murder of King Duff.

4. *trifled*, made trifling, dwarfed; a noun = verb, as often in Shakespeare.

*father*; a common title of respect for an old man. Cf. a pretty scene in the old play of *King Lear* (Hazlitt's ed. p. 372) where the king, who in his distress has come to France to seek help of his daughter, meets her and her husband disguised as country folk:

"*Cordelia*. Ah, good old father, tell to me thy grief.

*Leir*. Ah, good young daughter, I may call thee so;

For thou art like a daughter I did owe" (i.e. possess).

So in *King Lear*, IV. 6, where the blind Gloucester does not know that the man who addresses him as "father" (72) is really his son Edgar.



5, 6. *act...stage*; see some remarks as to Shakespeare's partiality for this metaphor, p. 262. *act*, deed; with a quibble however on the dramatic sense.

7. *travelling*; the 1st Folio has *travailing*. Etymologically *travel* is the same word as *travail*, 'toil'—to travel in olden days being a toilsome business. The two forms are interchanged in the original editions of Shakespeare, as in other Elizabethan writers; Milton, e.g., wrote *travailer* for *traveller* in *Comus*, 64.

It has been suggested that we should keep *travailing* here and interpret it of the toilsome efforts of the sun to dispel the darkness. But the epithet "travelling" alone determines what "lamp" is meant, and is therefore indispensable. The sun is readily pictured as the great traveller of the heavens. (F.)

8. *predominance*; an astrological word; cf. the passage in ridicule of astrological beliefs in *King Lear*, I. 2. 128—149, especially 132—134: "as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers [=traitors], by spherical predominance," i.e. by the superior "influence" (also an astrological term) of the stars.

*the day's shame*; as though the daylight were ashamed to reveal such work to the world. Cf. III. 2. 47.

11. *On Tuesday last*; one of those touches of circumstantial accuracy by which an effect of *vraisemblance* is given to fiction; it is the great secret of De Foe's convincing realism. Contrast the indefiniteness of Holinshed's narrative (**Extract 9**).

12. *towering*. Editors note that this is a term of falconry, used when the hawk soars spirally to a great height, preparatory to swooping (technically "stooping") on the prey. The term is similarly applied now to a partridge wounded in the head that ascends vertically as high as it can and then falls dead.

*her pride of place*; that is, the highest point of her soaring, whence she swoops; in technical language, her "pitch." Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, I. 1. 77—79:

"These growing feathers pluck'd from Cæsar's wing  
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
Who else would soar above the view of men."

Shakespeare had a thorough knowledge of country life and sport. His "early literary work proves that while in the country he eagerly studied birds, flowers, and trees, and gained a detailed knowledge of horses and dogs. All his kinsfolk were farmers, and with them he doubtless as a youth practised many field sports. Sympathetic references

to hawking, hunting [stag- and fox-hunting], coursing, and angling abound in his early plays and poems"—*Lee*.

Metaphors drawn from falconry are specially frequent in his plays, and his use of the technical terms shows the true sportsman's familiarity with the pastime. Here, for instance, to take a small point, he says *her* because in all breeds of hawks (the favourite English species for hawking was the peregrine falcon) the female bird is larger and more powerful than the male, and therefore more used. His partiality for this sport was shared with other Elizabethan dramatists, notably Massinger and Heywood (whose fine tragedy *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, I. 3, contains the best and best-known hawking-scene in the old drama).

15. *minions*; literally 'darlings,' and so 'the very pick of, the finest specimens of': a transition of sense not hard to trace.

24. *pretend*, intend, aim at; cf. II. 3. 114.

27. '*Gainst nature still*; another piece of "unnatural" (10) conduct! Cf. 16, "Turn'd wild in *nature*."

28. *ravin*, devour; see G. *up*; signifying completeness, as in 'to eat up,' 'to burn up.' So in *As You Like It*, II. 1. 62, "To fright the animals and to kill them up."

31. *Scone*: "The ancient royal city of Scone, supposed to have been the capital of the Pictish kingdom, lay two miles northward from the present town of Perth. It was the residence of the Scottish monarchs as early as the reign of Kenneth M'Alpin, and there was a long series of kings crowned on the celebrated stone enclosed in a chair, now used as the seat of our sovereigns at coronations in Westminster Abbey,...[to which] it was transferred by Edward I. in 1296"—*Knight*. Cf. v. 8. 74, 75. (F.)

31—33. *to Scone...to Colme-kill*. See **Extract 4** from Holinshed.

*Colme-kill*; Iona, one of the Western Isles; the burial-place of the ancient kings of Scotland, constantly mentioned as such by Holinshed. The word is said to mean 'the *cell* or chapel of St Columba,' by whom Christianity was first preached there in the sixth century (about A.D. 563). We have already mentioned St Colomba (I. 2. 62).

38. *Lest our old robes* etc., i.e. lest the new order of things prove not so easy for us as the old, under Duncan. Macduff means that he will say "adieu" now, as no one can tell how matters are likely to go, and they may not meet again. His words are prophetic—as we shall see.

40, 41. At first sight the couplet may seem rather feeble; but the speaker is "an old man," from whom a pious hope that they will all make the best of things and seek peace and amity comes naturally.

## ACT III.

## Scene 1.

7. *shine*, are conspicuous in their truth; some interpret 'prosper.' *Sennet*; a set of notes played on the trumpet; see G.
13. *all-thing*, altogether, quite; Dr Murray compares the adverbial use of *nothing*, e.g. in '*nothing* loath.'
16. *the which*, i.e. Macbeth's "commands."
22. *still*, ever, always. *grave*, weighty (Lat. *gravis*, 'heavy').
23. *we'll take to-morrow*; to-morrow will serve; we will defer it till to-morrow. Of course, the needless change *talk* has been suggested.
26. *the better*; implying 'faster than usual,' because of having to be back for supper.
27. *twain*; A.S. *twegen* = Middle E. *tweien* or *twein* = *twain*. "The A.S. forms show that the difference between *two* [fem. and neut., A.S. *twā*] and *twain* was originally one of gender only"—*Skeat*.
30. *are bestow'd*, have taken refuge, are lodged; cf. III. 6. 24.
32. *parricide*; applied to both the deed (as here) and the doer.
33. *strange invention*; a glance at the reports of his own guilt which he knows are in circulation.

Macbeth's repeated mention of "to-morrow" (cf. 23) is a blind to deceive Banquo and the others—as the latter part of the scene proves.

34, 35. *cause of state*, matters of state, state-affairs, that require our joint attention. *cause*, questions; cf. *Henry V.* I. I. 45, "Turn him to any cause of policy" (i.e. put him to, try him on).

44. *while*, till. Abbott says: "*while* now means only 'during the time when,' but in Elizabethan English both *while* and *whiles* meant also 'up to the time when'"—as in *Twelfth Night*, IV. 3. 28:

"He shall conceal it

Whiles you are willing it shall come to note" (i.e. until).

*God be with you*; slurred into *God b' wi' you*; whence the familiar contraction *Good-bye*.

49. *But to be safely thus*; an obvious *aposiopesis*: 'but to be *safely* established in this position *is everything*.' *fears in*, fears in respect of.
50. *royalty*, nobleness, natural fitness to be king.
52. *to*, in addition to.
56. *Genius*. Shakespeare almost always uses this word in allusion to the classical belief that every man is watched over by a guardian

spirit who directs his actions—what the Greeks called a *δαίμων* ('demon') and the Romans a 'genius.' Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. 4. 52 :

"Hark! you are call'd: some say the Genius so  
Cries 'come' to him that instantly must die."

So in *Julius Cæsar*, II. I. 66.

55—57. A reminiscence of North's *Plutarch*, which Shakespeare used in writing *Julius Cæsar* (1600) and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Editors quote the scene in the latter play (II. 3), where Antony interrogates an Egyptian soothsayer :

"*Ant.* Say to me,  
Whose fortunes shall rise higher, Cæsar's or mine?  
*Sooth.* Cæsar's.  
Therefore, O Antony, stay not by his side :  
Thy demon, that's thy spirit which keeps thee, is  
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,  
Where Cæsar's is not ; but, near him, thy angel  
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpower'd." (15—22.)

The story of Antony's consulting the Egyptian is told in North's *Life of Antony*. (F.)

I do not think that Shakespeare made much use of that particular *Life* in connection with *Julius Cæsar*; his debt there is more to the *Lives* of Cæsar himself and Brutus. So that may be he had already made some notes for *Antony and Cleopatra* (which probably followed *Macbeth*) and re-studied Antony's *Life*.

The change *Cæsar's* for *Cæsar* is needless; such uniformity is not Shakespearian at all.

57—60. Cf. I. 3. 54—61.

60. *a line of kings*; the "line" we see later; cf. IV. I. 117.

63. *with an unlineal hand*, by the hand of one who is no heir to me.

65. *filed*, defiled. A.S. *fȳlan*, 'to make foul, render filthy'; cf. Germ. *faul*. The quotations in the *New E. Dict.* show that the word was in common use (but more in pre-Shakespearian English) in the literal sense 'to make foul' and the figurative 'to defile, corrupt, taint.' Cf. Douglas's *Æneid* (1513), "Is that trew luif, guid faith and fame to file?"

68. *eternal jewel*, immortal soul; or perhaps 'eternal happiness.'

69. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, II. 2. 28, 29:

"Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness,  
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much";

i.e. the ever-ready foe of man, viz. Satan. The name *Satan* means 'adversary.'

64—70. A significant self-revelation: the man's unstudied utterance—to himself—of his innermost thoughts and feelings. No passage makes more strongly in favour of the view which attributes to Macbeth something of the real remorse of the conscience-stricken.

71. *come, fate, into the list*, etc. A defiance of Fate to do her worst; the defiance couched in terms drawn from the mediæval system of the Duello or single combat. Macbeth accepted what he thought the will of Fate (as voiced by the Weird Sisters) in relation to himself, but rebels against the will in relation to Banquo and his heirs, and challenges Fate to enter the lists against him in deadly combat.

*the list*, the space enclosed by movable barriers wherein a combat took place; more often in the plural. The scene of *Richard II.* 1. 3, is "The lists at Coventry" (where Bolingbroke and Mowbray were to meet in combat).

72. *champion me*, fight *against* me, as one champion against another; a very unusual sense; it would naturally mean 'fight *for* me.' A *champion* is 'one who undertakes to maintain or defend a cause in single combat'; Low Lat. *campio*, 'a combatant in a duel,' from *campus*, 'a field,' used in Low Lat. = 'a combat.'

*to the utterance*; F. *à outrance*, 'to extremity, to the death.' The *Stanford Dictionary* quotes Holland's translation of Pliny (1601), "they will drinke to the utterance," and his *Suetonius* (1606), "He exhibited one sworde fight performed by fencers to the outrance." F. *outrance*, O.F. *oultrance*, from F. *oultre*, Lat. *ultra*, 'beyond.'

Milton mentions the two kinds of combat—that fought out till one of the fighters was killed, and that which was merely an exhibition of skill at a contest for prizes; in the latter, spears and swords with blunted points were used. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, 1. 763—766, where he says that the hall of Pandemonium was spacious as a field

"where champions bold  
Wont ride in armed, and at the Soldan's chair  
Defied the best of Panim chivalry  
To mortal combat, or career with lance."

The Duello is fully illustrated in the last scene of *King Lear* (v. 3. 91—151), where, as here and in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the allusion to the mediæval customs and terms is strictly an anachronism.

79, 80. *this I made good to you* etc., I proved all this to you at our last meeting which was spent in demonstrating to you how etc. Some take *pass'd* as a preterite, and interpret *pass'd in probation* = 'I proved to you in detail.'

81. *borne in hand*, duped with false hopes. *To bear in hand* meant originally 'to maintain a statement, or charge against someone' (being apparently a translation of the French *maintenir*, 'to maintain a charge against,' mediæval Lat. *manutenere*); then 'to maintain a false statement' etc.; then 'to pretend, to delude with false hopes, to deceive.' In the last senses it is a common Elizabethan phrase.

"In the 14th of Eliz., 1572, an Act was passed against 'such as practise abused sciences, whereby they *bear* the people *in hand* that they can tell their destinies, deaths,'" etc.—*Elwin*. (F.)

83. *notion*, mind, intellect; its only Shakespearian sense. Lear says of himself ironically (I. 4. 246—249):

"Doth any here know me? This is not Lear:

Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?

Either his notion weakens, his discernings

Are lethargied."

88. *Are you so gossell'd...?* this is thought to refer to *Matt.* v. 44.

91, 92. They meant 'we are but human—and so will have revenge'; Macbeth affects to misunderstand them and replies that they represent the very lowest class of "manhood" (103), if they let Banquo's treatment of them pass unrequited (88).

93, 94. There is a similar "catalogue" of dogs, well-bred and other, in *King Lear*, III. 6. 71—73.

94. *Shough*, a kind of shaggy dog. *water-rug*, a rough water-dog; *rug* means rough, entangled hair, from Swedish *rugg*; cf. "*rug-headed*" = with shaggy hair, *Richard II.* II. 1. 156.

*demi-wolves*, a cross-breed. *clept*, called; see G. The word, except in the participle, was almost obsolete even in Shakespeare's day; as the dates of the illustrations in the *New E. Dict.* show.

95. *the valued file*; the "catalogue (of hounds) graded according to their relative value"—*Herford*.

97. *housekeeper*, house-dog, watch-dog; one kept to guard the house.

100. *Particular addition*, some special title (I. 3. 106), such as "the housekeeper," "the hunter," etc.

100, 101. *from the bill*, apart from the general list ("catalogue") in which they are all entered indiscriminately as "dogs."

102, 103. *if you have a station* etc.; if you claim to have some position of your own, and that not at the very bottom of the ladder among the nameless herd of mankind.

105. *takes your enemy off*; cf. I. 7. 20. The medial *e* in 'enemy' must be almost elided ('en'my'); so with 'remedy' in III. 2. 11.

112. *tugg'd with fortune*, dragged this way and that; some take it as a metaphor from wrestling and compare *The Winter's Tale*, IV. 4. 507, 508:

“let myself and fortune  
Tug for the time to come.”

116. *bloody distance*, a hostility that must lead to bloodshed. O.F. *destance*, Lat. *distantia*, ‘a standing apart’; hence ‘separation’; hence ‘discord, dispute, quarrel,’ which was the earliest sense of *distance* in E.

117, 118. i.e. every moment he lives is as a stab to the very principle of my being.

*my near'st of life*, that thing on which more than on anything else my very existence depends; my inmost life.

120. *avouch it*, be responsible for the deed; on the principle of *sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas*.

122. *may not*, cannot; the old sense of *may*; cf. Germ. *mag*.

*but wail*, i.e. but I would have to (“must”) bewail the fate of him whom etc.

123. *Who*. The neglect of the inflexion is very common, especially in interrogative phrases; see IV. 3. 166, and cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, II. 6. 29, 30:

“Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed,  
For who love I so much?”

Cf. modern colloquialisms like ‘Who did you see?’

130. *the perfect spy o' the time*; “probably = the result of perfect spying, the fit moment as determined by the closest scrutiny”—*Herford*. The objection to this interpretation (which seems, however, the best) is that it makes *spy* = ‘*spying out*, discovery by spying.’ Some would change “*the perfect*” to “*a perfect*”: as though Macbeth meant, ‘I will put some very competent man to spy out the favourable moment and will then make him known to you so that he may impart the information to you.’ Johnson, who proposed the change, thought that the “third murderer” was meant (III. 3); but it is evident later on that the man had *not* been made “acquainted” with the others. (F.)

131—133. See **Extract 9** from Holinshed.

132. *always thought*; an absolute construction, ‘it being of course not forgotten that’; ‘always remembering that.’

133. *clearness*, i.e. from all suspicion.

134. *rubs...botches*; metaphors for imperfect and clumsy work. *rubs*; unevennesses, e.g. on a board not properly planed; commonly

used of obstacles on a bowling-green, such as an uneven bit of ground or a stone, whence the figurative sense 'difficulty, impediment,' as in "there's the rub" (*Hamlet*, III. I. 65).

A *botch* is a 'flaw or blemish resulting from unskilful workmanship'—as here; then 'a clumsy patch; a blemish clumsily repaired, especially in a garment; a bungled piece of work.' Perhaps an onomatopœic word akin to *patch*. See *New E. Dict.*

136, 137. *absence...embrace the fate*. Euphemisms like 141, 142 and "takes off" in 105: how characteristic of the man! He has just enough conscience, of a sort, to make him uncomfortable and afraid to look his deeds in the face.

### Scene 2.

4. *For a few words*. Was *she* going to propose the "taking-off" of Banquo, even if Macbeth had not led up to the subject? Cf. 38. She evidently knows the second prophecy of the Witches (cf. 37), and is full of a terrible unrest.

4—7. The rhyme of aphorisms and proverbial wisdom.

8. *why do you keep alone?* A key-note surely of the latter part of the tragedy, especially as it concerns Lady Macbeth. Partnership in guilt has begun to produce its inevitable result, separation "between the two who dare not meet each other's eyes"; and events widen the chasm more and more. The feeling that she has done it all for him, and through it lost him, must be one of the heart-sorrows that explain the first scene of Act V.

10, 11. *Using*, harbouring; so to "use discontent" in *Much Ado About Nothing*, I. 3. 41, is to harbour, cherish it.

*those thoughts*; cf. II. 2. 33, 34.

11. *without*, beyond, literally 'outside of'; see III. 4. 14.

13. *scotch'd*, cut with shallow incisions; slashed with wounds that will soon "close" again. This is another of Theobald's fine suggestions; the 1st Folio has *scorch'd*. Cf. *Coriolanus*, IV. 5. 198, "he scotched him and notched him like a carbonado" (i.e. like a piece of meat slashed across ready for broiling). See also *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV. 7. 10, where a soldier, making light of his wounds, says:

"I have yet

Room for six scotches more,"

i.e. a few more shallow cuts like these. Without question, we should read *scotch'd*, since *scorch'd* = 'flayed' (the original sense of *scorch*) would be inconsistent with line 14. See G. (F.)



15. *tooth*; cf. the now proverbial words in *King Lear*, I. 4. 310, "sharper than a serpent's tooth." See III. 4. 31.

16. *the frame of things*, the whole fabric of the universe—the heavens and the earth ("both worlds"). Cf. *Hamlet*, II. 2. 310, "this goodly *frame*, the earth." It is a favourite word with Milton and the 18th century writers like Thomson who were influenced by his style. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, VIII. 15, 16:

"When I behold this goodly frame, this World  
Of Heaven and Earth consisting."

Thomson in *Winter* speaks of "Nature's boundless frame." We may compare the Lucretian (v. 96) phrase *moles et machina mundi*.

The irregular rhythm reflects Macbeth's great passion.

20. *our peace*; the bliss which they had promised themselves in the attainment of the crown: for both there could have been no "peace" of mind while the prophecy of the Witches remained unfulfilled. The jingling, ironical repetition of *peace*, in two senses, viz. 'peace of mind' and 'the peace of the grave,' belongs to the same category of grim self-mockery as Gaunt's "Old Gaunt indeed, and gaunt in being old," *Richard II.* II. 1. 74; see II. 2. 56, 57, note. It is to my mind an absolutely Shakespearian touch, "the language of suppressed passion" (Coleridge), as such word-play often is.

The later Folios have "our *place*," which some adopt; it strikes me as one of those tame, obvious readings which are condemned by their commonplace obviousness. "Most of the changes" made in the 2nd Folio (1632), says Mr Lee, were "arbitrary and needless"; and "our *place*" seems precisely the sort of change which suggests itself to a mind that misses the subtlety of the original. Note, too, that such verbal repetition as *peace...peace* is thoroughly Elizabethan; we have another instance in v. 3. 44; and there too changes have been proposed in order to get rid of the repetition. The cardinal error on which the correction of such passages turns is that each is dealt with separately; whereas they ought to be viewed comparatively, as illustrations of a literary form which commended itself to Elizabethan taste, though it may not commend itself to modern taste.

21. For the metaphor cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, III. 2. 24—27:

*Bassanio.* Let me choose;

For as I am, I live upon the rack.

*Portia.* Upon the rack, Bassanio! then confess  
What treason there is mingled with your love."

22. *ecstasy*; see G. Macbeth's own phrase ("restless ecstasy")

describes to the life his increasing torture of unrest. Imagination, which might have restrained him from crime (I. 3. 130—137) by picturing vividly its results, now fills him with a fever of fear that drives him into new crimes with the hope of warding off the consequences of the old. And more and more does this fever enfeeble his power of resisting the supernatural.

22—26. For the whole sentiment—the peace of the grave—cf. the beautiful song in *Cymbeline*, IV. 2. 258—281, “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun.”

23. *he*; emphatic; in antithesis to 17—19.

24, 25. We have seen Duncan assailed by each (except “poison”). *his*, its; or “treason” may be personified.

27. *Gentle my lord*; the adjective is often transposed thus (perhaps to give it emphasis) in short phrases of address; cf. *Richard II.* I. I. 184, “Then, dear my liege, mine honour let me try.”

*sleek...rugged*; the metaphor of smoothing roughened hair. Milton uses *sleek* very prettily in *Comus* (880—882):

“[By] fair Ligea’s golden comb,  
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks  
Sleeking her soft alluring locks.”

Cf. Tennyson’s description of the shepherds tending the dead Paris, “One raised the Prince, one sleek’d the squalid hair” (*The Death of Enone*). It seems, indeed, a marvel that no emendator has suggested *locks* here!

28, 30. Scan *'mong* and *rememb(e)rance* (4 syllables).

30, 31. *Let your remembrance* etc.; ‘you have reminded me of my duty towards my guests; see that *you* do your share as hostess, especially as regards Banquo; treat him with particular distinction.’

Macbeth has not told her of the plot, but her hint in 38 encourages him to a half-confidence (43—46). Dramatically the purpose of this half-confidence (which, we may be sure, is quite enough for her quick intelligence) is that it enables Lady Macbeth to play her part better in the supreme crisis of the banquet-scene. Though *she* sees nothing then, she guesses (from this interview) what Macbeth thinks he sees, and is therefore better able to deal with him, and with the danger of his self-betrayal.

32, 33. *Unsafe the while* etc. As it stands the passage seems to mean: ‘during the time that we, in our insecurity, are forced to bathe our dignities in these streams of flattery to others as the only way of keeping them in vigour (or unsoiled).’ Their “honours,” i.e. their

position as king and queen, are precarious and can only be maintained by flattery of such men as Banquo; and Macbeth expresses this insecurity by likening the "honours" to something which must be invigorated by fresh water if it is to keep sound and wholesome. But the sense is forced, and the passage, through loss of some words, corrupt beyond cure.

34, 35. Cf. I. 5. 61—64, I. 7. 81, 82.

35. *leave this*, dismiss such thoughts: a variation on her former futile advice (10, 11).

38. Probably one of Shakespeare's favourite legal metaphors (cf. 49), *nature's copy* meaning the *copyhold* or tenure by which they hold their lives from nature, as a man holds a farm from the owner. *Copyhold* "was a form of land tenure which differed from freehold in being terminable"—*Herford*. It is in fact as if, in answer to Macbeth's remark that Banquo and Fleance still "live," she retorted: 'Yes, but they're only life-tenants!'

Some interpret 'the form of man' or 'of human nature,' from *copy* = 'reproduction' (F.). But I doubt whether without some qualifying words the phrase *nature's copy* could bear either sense.

*eterne*; used by Shakespeare in only one other place, viz. *Hamlet*, II. 2. 512 (the Player's speech). Spenser has it in *The Faerie Queene*, III. 6. 47. From *eterne* (Lat. *aternus*) we get the Elizabethan verb *eternise*, 'to make immortal.'

39. Justly did Macbeth say of himself that his "is the vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself." For "the weird sisters when they hailed him as king, hailed Banquo as the father of kings. The rapid fulfilment in so unforeseen a way of the one prophecy should have taught him the futility of seeking to frustrate the other. But logic is far less potent with a man of Macbeth's nature than fears"—*Boas*. Moreover, he has (as we shall see in the last Act) the true credulity of the gambler, who catches at every hint of the favour of his "fortune" or "fate," yet remains blind and deaf to every rebuff. To the very end Macbeth trusts in the prophecies that seem to his good and ignores those that are fulfilled to his harm: if one goes against him, he falls back on another, till he entrenches himself in the last and unavailing stronghold.

41. *cloister'd*, within cloisters. "The bats wheeling round the dim cloisters of Queens' College, Cambridge, have frequently impressed on me the singular propriety of this original epithet"—*Stevens*. (F.)

*to*, in obedience to. *Hecate's*; for the scansion (*Hecat's*) cf. II. 1. 52, note.

42. *shard-borne*, borne through the air upon scaly wing-cases. A writer on Shakespeare's "natural history" says: "The beetle is furnished with two large membranaceous wings, which are protected from external injury by two very hard, horny *wing-cases*, or, as entomologists term them, *elytra*... The old English name was 'shard.' These shards or *wing-cases* are raised and expanded when the beetle flies, and by their concavity act like two parachutes in supporting him in the air. Hence the propriety and correctness of Shakespeare's description, 'the shard-borne beetle,' a description embodied in a single epithet." (F.)

The word *shard* or *sherd* (see G.), literally 'a fragment,' commonly meant 'a fragment of pottery,' as in *Isaiah* xxx. 14 and *Ezekiel* xxiii. 34 ("thou shalt...break the sherds thereof," i.e. of the "cup" mentioned in verse 33). Being hard, shiny and brittle, the wing-cases of the beetle might well be likened to bits of pottery and called *shards*. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. 2. 20, "They are his shards, and he their beetle. So"; and *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 20, "The sharded beetle" (i.e. furnished with shards).

Everyone now interprets *shard-borne* in this way and rejects the notion that we should read 'shard-born' with Folios 3 and 4 (which are almost valueless as textual authorities) in the sense 'born among refuse,' or 'born in dung' (from a use of *shard* in some dialects).

42, 43. Gray, probably with these lines in his memory, marks the fall of night in the same way, *The Elegy*, 5—8.

43. *yawning*, drowsy. *peal*; the metaphor was suggested, I suppose, by the old custom of ringing the curfew at dusk. We might paraphrase 'his curfew-signal of night and sleep,' or 'his nightly curfew that bids to slumber.'

44. *note*, notoriety; often = 'distinction,' whether good (cf. v. 7. 21), or bad, as here; cf. *All's Well That Ends Well*, v. 3. 12—15:

"the young lord

Did to his majesty, his mother and his lady

Offence of mighty note; but to himself

The greatest wrong of all."

Schmidt does not put this among the passages where *note* has the idea 'stigma, brand' (= Lat. *nota*, 'a mark of censure'—cf. the *nota censoria* at Rome, a kind of public disgrace inflicted by the Censors).

45. How dreadful is the touch of tenderness at such a moment!

46—53. Contrast her great apostrophe to night and the powers of darkness and evil; hers rings with a fierce rhetorical clang, that

corresponds precisely with her hard, imperious will; his is steeped in sentiment and fancy, and alive with imagery and observation of nature: more poetical, in short, more emotional, more imaginative. It is from him that we have the play's wonderful rhapsodies of speech; and the greater his feeling the higher rises the wave of his eloquence, words being for him the anodyne of mental agony, just as with Hamlet and Richard II. they are the substitute of action. A man of great physical (but not moral) bravery, a fierce fighter, Macbeth is also, and typically, the poet, the dreamer of dreamers, the Celtic visionary: as we see at such moments as this. Lady Macbeth overshadows him simply because sheer power of doing tends to overshadow thought or speech.

46. *seeling night*, night that closes the eyes; see G.

47. The same thought as in II. 4. 8, viz. that the deed is too terrible for daylight. Day in its "pity" would warn Banquo. *Eye of day* often (but not here) means the sun; cf. *Il Penseroso*, 141, "Hide me from day's garish eye," and Milton's *Sonnet to the Nightingale*, 5, "Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day."

49. The legal metaphor is the outcome of the image suggested by her speech (38). Macbeth likens himself to a man whose safety depends on the cancelling of some "bond"; the "bond" here being that by which Banquo and Fleance hold their tenure of life. Editors compare *Richard III.* IV. 4. 77, 78, where Queen Margaret prays for Richard's death:

"Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,  
That I may live to say, The dog is dead!"

Shakespeare's partiality for legal terms and accuracy in using them indicate a considerable knowledge of law, which gave rise to the conjecture that as a youth he may have been in an attorney's office. But his use of technical terms in general is very correct. *King Lear* shows that his medical knowledge was great; yet the medical profession have not claimed him as a doctor. The Trial-scene in *The Merchant of Venice* is always quoted as a specially striking illustration of his legal lore.

51. *the rooky wood*, the wood which is the haunt of rooks or "crows" (50). Furness quotes the excellent comment:

"'Crow' is the common appellation of the 'rook,' the latter word being used only when we would speak with precision, and never by the country people, as the word 'crowkeeper' [see *King Lear*, IV. 6. 88] will serve to show, which means the boy who keeps the *rooks* (not carrion crows) off the seed-corn....The passage simply

means, 'the rook hastens its evening flight to the wood where its fellows are already assembled,' and to our mind 'the rooky wood' is a lively and natural picture: the *generic* term 'crow' is used for the *specific* term 'rook.'

This seems to me to meet the objection that it is unnatural "merely to say of the *crow* that he is flying to a wood that abounds with *rooks*": such an antithesis is not necessarily implied.

Some editors, however, interpret *rooky* = 'misty,' *rooky* or *roky* being a north-country variation of *reky* (= *reeky*), 'vaporous, misty'; from Middle E. *roke*, 'mist,' a variant form of *reke* (= *reek*, cognate with Germ. *rauch*, 'smoke'). Cf. 'Auld *Reekie*' as a popular title for Edinburgh. But it is not obvious why Shakespeare, a midlander by birth and Londoner by residence, should introduce a north-country dialect word; nor do editors give a single instance of its literary use before Shakespeare. I conclude, then, that Shakespeare coined the word *rooky* and intended it to mean 'frequented by rooks.'

The short line (51) is to mark a pause during which Macbeth looks out. The whole picture has the soft, delicate sentiment of one of Corot's landscapes. The Wallace Collection, we may note, has a fine picture by Corot representing Macbeth's first encounter with the Witches.

52. "There is a line in the play of *Macbeth*, uttered as the evening shadows begin to gather on the day of Banquo's murder, which we may repeat to ourselves as a motto of the entire tragedy, 'Good things of day begin to droop and drowse.' It is the tragedy of the twilight and the setting-in of thick darkness upon a human soul. We assist at the spectacle of a terrible sunset in folded clouds of blood"—*Dowden*.

53. *preys*, i.e. their respective kinds of prey; the plural often has this notion 'respective.'

55. Mr Cunliffe notes that Seneca's philosophy, especially his pithy commonplaces on life, strongly affected the Elizabethan dramatists. A striking aphorism in one of his tragedies will appear again and again, under slight variation of form, in the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Thus Seneca wrote in the *Agamemnon*: "*per scelera semper sceleribus certum est iter.*" The thought started on its Elizabethan career in Studley's translation of the *Agamemnon* (1566): "The safest path to mischief is by mischief open still." Thence it passed into the old tragedy *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588): "The safest passage is from bad to worse." And then a series of writers gave it a turn: Marston in *The Malcontent*, v. 2 ("Black deed only through black deed safely flies"); Shakespeare here; Jonson in *Catiline*, I. 2; Webster in *The*

*White Devil*, II. I ("Small mischiefs are by greater made secure"); and Massinger in *The Duke of Milan*, II. I. After Massinger it seems to have enjoyed a not undeserved rest. (Cunliffe, pp. 24, 25.)

### Scene 3.

1. *Third Murderer*. It has actually been propounded that he is Macbeth himself.

2—4. *since he delivers* etc.; seeing that he reports correctly what we have to do.

9, 10. i.e. all the other guests expected at the banquet. *note*, list. *expectation*, people expected; abstract for concrete. Banquo is a little late (11), as he anticipated (III. I. 25—28).

11. *about*, i.e. round, by the longer way.

18. *Fleance escapes*. See **Extract 12**, 2nd paragraph. "Fleance, after the assassination of his father, fled into Wales, where, by the daughter of the prince of that country, he had a son named Walter, who afterwards became Lord High Steward of Scotland, and from thence assumed the name of *Walter Steward*. From him, in a direct line, King James I. was [supposed to be] descended, in compliment to whom our author has chosen to describe Banquo, who was equally concerned with Macbeth in the murder of Duncan, as innocent of that crime"—*Malone*. (F.)

But we are now told that "history knows nothing of Banquo, nor of Fleance," i.e. that they are simply fictitious persons, the invention of the old chroniclers. No doubt, however, Shakespeare accepted the Stuart tradition and therefore drew a favourable picture of Banquo, as James's supposed ancestor.

19. *the way*, the best way, the right thing to do.

### Scene 4.

1. *degrees*, ranks.

1, 2. *at first And last*, from the beginning to the end of the feast. Cf. 1 *Henry VI*. v. 5. 102, "Ay, grief, I fear me, both at first and last."

5. *keeps her state*, remains in her chair of state, i.e. a raised, canopied throne. No doubt, *state* in this sense was originally short for 'chair (or 'seat') of *state*' (= 'dignity,' 'honour'). It is common in Elizabethan writers, e.g. in stage-directions; cf. Shirley's great Masque, *The*

*Triumph of Peace* (1634): "At the lower end of the room, opposite to the State, was raised a stage with a descent of stairs in two branches leading into the room." So in Ben Jonson's description of the scenery of his *Masque of Blackness*: "The scene behind seemed a vast sea...being the level of the state, which was placed in the upper end of the hall." Sometimes the word was used of the canopy alone; cf. *Paradise Lost*, x. 445—447, where Satan, entering the hall of Pandemonium,

"Ascended his high throne, which, under state  
Of richest texture spread, at the upper end  
Was placed in regal lustre."

6. *require her welcome*, ask her to bid you all welcome.

14. *'Tis better* etc.; "a daringly ungrammatical way of saying that the blood is better on the murderer's face than in Banquo's veins"—*Herford*. For *without*= 'outside' see note on III. 2. 11. Some interpret *than he within*= 'than that he should be within this room'; which seems less probable.

19. *nonpareil*; see G.

22, 23. The metaphors indicate the different aspects under which his kingship might have been viewed and seen to be "perfect" (21). It would have been sound in itself to the very core, as solid marble; firmly based as the rocks of the coast not far off; unfettered and free in its range as the air that surrounds us.

24. *cabin'd, cribb'd*, imprisoned as in some cabin or cell, shut up in a crib. The noun *cabin* often signified 'a cell, a small room,' without any reference to a ship's cabin. *Crib* was used in much the same way= 'a hovel, a narrow room' (cf. 2 *Henry IV.* III. 1. 9), but suggests still more the idea 'cramped space.'

This line of *Macbeth* is now a frequent quotation. Dr Murray quotes Byron, *Childe Harold*, IV. 127 (speaking of "our right of thought"):

"this, at least, shall still be mine:

Though from our birth the faculty divine

Is chain'd and tortured—cabin'd, cribb'd, confined."

25. *safe*, safely dispatched. A colloquial use, as in our phrase 'safe out of the way.' So in *The Tempest*, III. 1. 19—21, Miranda bids Ferdinand take a rest, as Prospero will not know:

"My father

Is hard at study; pray now rest yourself;

He's safe for these three hours."

27. *trenched*; F. *trancher*, 'to cut'; see V. 8. 9.



29. *worm*, snake; as often, reptiles in general being considered venomous. Cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III. 2. 70, 71:

"And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch!

Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?"

*Worm* is used in *Antony and Cleopatra* of the asp (serpent) with which Cleopatra killed herself (v. 2. 243, 256). A.S. *wyrm* means indifferently 'worm' and 'snake.'

32. *We'll hear, ourselves, again*; we (the regal 'we') will hear your report to-morrow when we are alone, by *ourselves* (which would be rather more natural than *ourselves*).

33—37. Lady Macbeth rebukes her husband for not playing the part of a host (forgetful of his promise and of his own instructions to her, III. 2. 29—31). 'You do not bid the company welcome; a feast is no feast—'tis a mere inn-meal—if during its course the host does not often assure his guests how glad he is to see them: mere eating can best be done at home: away from home people look for that ceremonial courtesy (such as the pledging of toasts) which is a relish to the food and without which a gathering is cold and incomplete.'

To *make* or *do* or *give cheer* was a common phrase='to give a kindly welcome, to receive hospitably.' Cf. *Lucrece*, 89, 90:

"So guiltless she securely gives good cheer

And reverend welcome to her princely guest."

36. Scan *c'rémony*.

37. *remembrancer*; cf. III. 2. 30.

39. I cannot find any justification of the theory that Macbeth sees two ghosts—first Banquo's and then (92) Duncan's, or *vice versa*. Lines 50 and 81 (cf. 27) *must* refer to Banquo, and if a different ghost had been intended after 92 the fact would have been indicated by the Folio's stage-direction. See also Forman's account (p. 244). Moreover, on general æsthetic grounds the theory appears indefensible.

40. *Here had we now...roof'd*; all the rank and distinction of our country would be assembled under this roof.

41. *graced*, gracious. In Elizabethan E. the use of the adjectival and participial terminations was far less regular than now: hence we often find *-ed = -ful*. Cf. "guiled shore," i.e. guileful, treacherous, in *The Merchant of Venice*, III. 2. 97; "a graced palace," i.e. full of grace and dignity, in *King Lear*, I. 4. 267; "disdain'd contempt," i.e. disdainful, in I *Henry IV.* I. 3. 183. So in Marlowe's *Faustus*, chorus 16, "The fruitful plot of scholarism graced."

42. *who*; cf. III. I. 123. *may I, I can*.

43. *mischance*, his ill luck in not being here.

55. *upon a thought*; literally 'following upon'; in a moment or two.

57. *extend his passion*, increase his agitation.

58. *Are you a man?* An echo of her previous taunts (I. 7. 49—51).

60. *proper*, fine! Of course, said ironically.

62. *This is the...dagger*; this is another of your apparitions, like that visionary dagger!

*air-drawn*, drawn in the air, unreal. She knows him so well and her mind works so swiftly that I think she guesses, from his hints, 59, 60, and from what passed between them at their last meeting, III. 2, what is the cause of his "passion." Certainly she must have guessed (cf. 74) before the Ghost's reappearance, though she may suppose it is Duncan whom he imagines present.

63. *flaws*, bursts; see G.

64. *to*, compared with; from the notion 'in relation to.' A very common use; cf. *Hamlet*, I. 2. 139, 140:

"So excellent a king; that was, *to* this,

Hyperion *to* a satyr."

65. i.e. a "Winter's Tale"; cf. *Richard II.* v. 1. 40—42. *The Old Wives' Tale* is the title of a comedy by Peele (1558—1598) to which Milton owed something in *Comus*.

66. *Authorized by*; literally 'vouched for by,' hence 'told on the authority of.' For the scansion cf. *Sonnet* 35, "Authórizing thy trespass with compare"; and *chástise* in I. 5. 25. These verbs in *-ise* or *-ize* (the syllable now accented) still showed in Elizabethan E. the French influence, e.g. *authórizze* = F. *autóriser*.

72, 73. i.e. we must leave the dead unburied so that birds of prey may devour them and thus serve as their tombs.

76. *humane*; this is Shakespeare's invariable accentuation of the word except in one doubtful passage, viz. *The Winter's Tale*, III. 2. 166 (where it follows its subject). Cf. *Lucrece*, 571, "By holy humane law, and common troth." The reason seems to be that the present distinction between *human*, 'of or pertaining to man,' and *humane*, 'worthy of a man, benevolent,' did not then exist. The 1st Folio always has *humane*, whether the sense be the one or the other. See Schmidt's *Lexicon*, p. 1413. So Bacon speaks of Truth "as the Sovereigne good of humane Nature" (*Essay* I.); and in *The New Atlantis* he declares the "end, i.e. aim, of knowledge" to be "the Enlarging of the bounds of humane Empire, to the effecting of all Things possible" (Pitt Press ed. p. 35). As late as Dryden and Pope we find *humane* = *human*.

*purged the gentle weal*; "purged the state of violence and hence made it 'gentle'"—*Herford*. We had the same proleptic use of the same adjective in I. 6. 3.

81. *twenty*; cf. 27.

83, 84. Mr Moulton brings out the extreme resourcefulness and tact of Lady Macbeth's method of dealing with her husband at this crisis. First she seeks by angry taunts to shame him into self-control. But he is beyond such appeal. "Instantly she changes her tactics, and, employing a device so often effective with patients of disordered brain, she endeavours to recall him to his senses by assuming an ordinary tone of voice; hitherto she has whispered, now, in the hearing of all, she makes the practical remark [III. 4. 83, 84]...The device proves successful, his nerves respond to the tone of everyday life, and recovering himself he uses all his skill of deportment, to efface the strangeness of the episode, until the reappearance of his victim plunges the scene in confusion past recovery."

85. *muse*, wonder; see G.

92. *And all to all*, and pledge all good wishes to all.

95. *speculation*, intelligence; that which is absent from the eyes of a blind man, though they may show no external defect. *Amaurosis*, for instance, commonly makes no external change in the eye; it was probably the cause of Milton's blindness, as he could say of his eyes, "so little do they betray any external appearance of injury, that they are as unclouded and bright as the eyes of those who see most distinctly" (*Second Defence*). Still, they must have lacked *speculation*, i.e. the look which reveals that the vision and the brain are in their normal relation. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3. 109. Some, however, take *speculation* = power of sight.

101. *Hyrcean*, Hyrcanian; from "*Hyrkania*, a province of the ancient Persian Empire, on the S. and S.E. shores of the Caspian or Hyrcanian Sea"—*Classical Dict.*; mentioned in *Paradise Regained*, III. 317. It was famous as a breeding-place of tigers; hence proverbial, like Scythia, of all that is barbarous and savage. Cf. *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, v. 1. 158, 159:

"But thou art sprung from Scythian Caucasus,  
And tigers of Hyrcania gave thee suck."

"*Hyrceanian* beast" in *Hamlet*, II. 2. 472, means 'tiger.'

102. *nerves*, sinews (= Lat. *nervi*); never used by Shakespeare in the modern sense. Milton (*Sonnet 17*), translating the phrase *nervi belli pecunia*, calls money 'the nerve'—where we say 'the sinews'—of war.

105. *If trembling I inhabit then.* This is an unsolved difficulty. The interpretation which now finds favour is: 'if I display trembling then,' literally 'if I *vest* myself in trembling, if I put on trembling as an outward *habit* or *garb*.' To put a thing on as a dress is to display it, and to 'put on trembling' is a metaphor such as we often get with 'to dress' and 'to clothe.' Cf. *Measure for Measure*, II. 2. 118, "Drest in a little brief authority"; and I *Henry IV.* III. 2. 51, "dressed...in humility." But this rendering of *inhabit* = 'to put on as a dress (or custom)' seems to me hardly possible: the great dictionaries do not recognise that *inhabit* ever bears any other notion than that of 'dwelling,' i.e. of *habitation*, not *habit*.

Some take *inhabit* absolutely = 'if trembling I stay at home,' 'if I remain skulking within doors' (literally 'within any *habitation*'): that is, instead of accepting the challenge and going forth "to the desert." We may accept this interpretation for want of a better, though the use of *inhabit* is strange.

Some again read *inhibit*; others *inhibit thee*; but neither (apart from the change of reading) is satisfactory, because *inhibit* must mean 'to forbid,' and 'to forbid' a challenger cannot possibly be twisted into meaning 'refuse to meet him in combat.' The 2nd and later Folios place the comma after *inhabit*, making *then* go with the second part of the sentence. (F.)

*protest me*, i.e. declare me to be.

106. *baby*; perhaps in the ordinary sense, implying here a weak, sickly child; but most interpret it = 'doll,' with the notion, 'call me a mere puppet.' Cf. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Fifth Song, "Sweet babes must babies have, but shrewd [i.e. naughty] girls must be beaten." (F.)

110. *admired*, strange, wonderful; cf. "wonder" in 112. See G.

111. *overcome us*. "Can such wonders as these *pass over us* without wonder, as a casual summer cloud passes over us?"—*Johnson*. Editors show that this literal use of *overcome* was not uncommon in Elizabethan E. Yet I cannot help thinking that what Macbeth means is 'and overpower us like a summer thunderstorm.'

112, 113. *You make me strange* etc.; literally 'you make me seem a stranger to my natural disposition': that is, 'you fill me with wonder and confusion,' 'I hardly know myself.' Hitherto he has always thought himself a brave man, yet now he is overcome by something which moves no fear at all in his wife: hence he does not know what to make of himself, whether to consider himself a coward or not. The

whole phrase expresses extreme astonishment; his conviction of the reality of the vision being absolute. *owe* = 'possess.'

Surely he is addressing Lady Macbeth alone, not the company in general. For "strange" carries on the idea of "wonder" suggested in her speech (110) to which he has been replying (110—112). Moreover, line 115 ("natural ruby") is hardly appropriate to Highland warriors. And does it not minimise the impression of his agony to suggest that he is even conscious of the presence of his guests? Note that he does not speak a word of farewell to them. For him there seem at the moment to be but two realities—the ghost and the wife who had goaded him into crime.

117. She interposes instantly because the question (116) may lead to Macbeth's betraying himself.

119. *Stand...upon.* Cf. 3 *Henry VI.* iv. 7. 58, "Why, brother, wherefore *stand you on* nice points?" i.e. why are you so particular about, attach so much importance to, subtle points like these?

122—126. How appropriate to Macbeth's mood! "He has by guilt torn himself live-asunder from nature, and is, therefore, himself in a preternatural state: no wonder, then, that he is inclined to superstition, and faith in the unknown of signs and tokens, and super-human agencies"—*Coleridge.*

123. *trees*; Steevens refers to the story in *Aeneid* III. of the bleeding tree that revealed the murder of Polydorus. The story is referred to by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*, 1. 2. 30 *et seq.*, imitating Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, 6. 27.

124—126. *Augures and understood relations* etc. 'Divinations and perception of the inner connection of things and incidents, by means of magpies, jackdaws and rooks, have exposed murderers whose deeds were done in the utmost secrecy.'

The 1st Folio has *augures*, and the form is probably correct, meaning 'divinations.' Editors show that *augure* was an Elizabethan variant form of the common abstract word *augurie*. Here the abstract word goes well with the other abstract word "relations." I suppose that Shakespeare uses *augure* rather than *augurie*, as elsewhere, for the sake of the metre. Some substitute *augurs*; but "*Augurs and relations*" is an awkward combination—hence the suggestion of a further change, "*Augurs that understood (or understand) relations.*" Shakespeare, however, almost always uses *augurer*, not *augur*, when he means 'a man who divines by augury.' On the whole, *augures* = 'divinations' is best.

Lat. *augurium* (observation of the flight and notes of birds and other signs) is supposed by some to be connected with *avis*, 'a bird,' and *gar*, from the root of *garrere*, 'to talk'; cf. *garrulus*. Others connect it with Lat. *augere*, 'to increase.'

"To *understand relations* as *an augur*, is to know how those things *relate* to each other, which have no visible combination or dependence"—*Johnson*; and also how they relate to the matter concerning which the soothsayer is making enquiry.

125. *magot-pies*, magpies; see G. *choughs*, jackdaws; see G.

127. *at odds with*, at variance with.

128. *How say'st thou, that*, what say you to the fact that?

*denies*, refuses to come. No doubt, Macduff had been invited to the banquet. See **Extract 14**.

Mr Moulton well remarks that the parts severally played by Banquo in the earlier and Macduff in the later scenes constitute a sort of "balance" in the action of the tragedy. "Macduff comes into prominence upon Banquo's death, as Antony upon the fall of Cæsar," in *Julius Cæsar*. Macbeth's first fears, on the removal of Banquo, are directed to Macduff—as we see here. And as the murder of Banquo rouses suspicions (III. 6) which make Macbeth's position harder, so the crime against Macduff's family hastens the nemesis by giving Macduff (the inciter and supporter of Malcolm) the motive of private as well as public revenge.

132. *fee'd*, in my pay; see **Extract 17**.

133. Scan 'times: "And 'times | I will | —to thè | weí-rd | sísters" (the last two feet being inversions of stress).

133—135. The forces of evil which under the inspiration of the Witches he had called into play and employed against Duncan and Banquo seem now to be threatening Macbeth himself. He is being driven to that pitch of desperation in which suspense is torture, and knowledge of the worst a relief: hence his recourse to the Witches. Dramatically, therefore, the action of the play has reached the point where the reintroduction of the Witches-element is most natural.

136. *All causes*, all considerations; every scruple and obstacle.

139. *Strange things*; the murder of Macduff.

141. *the season*, the seasoning; "that which *preserves* nature, and keeps it *fresh* and *lasting*." (F.)

It has been well remarked, as an illustration of their tender relations, that Lady Macbeth utters no word of reproach to him on his unmanliness in the late scene. His welfare is still her first thought and care.

142. *My strange and self-abuse* etc.; my strange self-deception is (=is due to) the fear of the novice inexperienced in crime,—the fear that attends first attempts at crime and lacks the hardening of experience. See *abuse* in G.

143. *initiate*; used actively = 'initiator,' 'of or belonging to initiation.' Apparently Macbeth is so far himself again as to recognise that the vision was unreal.

144. *deed*; another of his euphemisms (= 'crime').

Looking back on the whole scene we feel that, as has been well said, Macbeth has already touched the extreme of torture: for what greater punishment than that inflicted in this agonising scene could the wit of man conceive? And he must live in ever-present fear of its recurrence. And the instrument by which Nemesis inflicts this punishment is his imagination, through which he has "become an absolute victim to terrors of conscience in supernatural form." This imagination is the thing without which Lady Macbeth had reckoned. Wonderful indeed that she should have made such a mistake!

How far either of them is conscience-stricken by genuine remorse is a matter which each student must try to determine for himself. To say of Macbeth's language in general, after the murder of Duncan, that it "is the grave utterance of the very heart, conscience-sick, even to the last faintings of moral death," is, to my mind, rather to overstate the strain of repentance that runs through his speeches. Fear is, at least, a considerable element of his unrest, and allowance must be made for his intense imaginativeness which sublimates his feelings and expresses them in the extremest forms. Still, the repentance is there: "Macbeth retained enough of goodness to make him a haggard, miserable criminal": though, first and last, he had "never enough to restrain him from a crime."

### Scene 5.

The authenticity of this scene is suspected by some critics; without valid reasons, as appears to me.

1. *Hecate*; scan *Hecat'*, as before (II. I. 52).

7. *close contriver*, secret plotter.

13. *Loves for his own ends, not for you*. One of the lines that raise the question of the relation of *Macbeth* to *The Witch*. Middleton makes his Hecate say (I. 2), after the disconsolate suitor Sebastian has come to consult her, "I know he loves me not, nor there's no hope on't."

15. *Acheron*; properly, a river of the infernal world of classical mythology; the 'stream of pain' (Gk. ἄχος, 'pain,' + ῥεῖν, 'to flow'); see the celebrated description of the rivers (Styx, Cocytus, Acheron, Lethe) in *Paradise Lost*, II. Shakespeare, however, seems to have regarded *Acheron* as a burning lake. The mention of the classical name is not inappropriate to the speaker (Hecate), though *her* introduction among the "weird sisters" of northern and Teutonic mythology is, strictly, indefensible.

As Macbeth is to come "thither" (16) to meet them, *Acheron* must be meant as a poetical title for some mountain-pool or lake (gloomy as the infernal Acheron), where the Witches are wont to assemble, near Macbeth's castle. (F.)

20. *I am for the air*. Another of the parallels to *The Witch*; cf. l. 2, where Hecate, ere she ascends, says, "I'm for aloft." The words occur just before the song "Come away, come away"; see line 34 of this scene of *Macbeth*.

Many illustrations of this notion of Hecate and witches riding through the air might be quoted from Elizabethan writers. Thus Reginald Scot complained "that certaine wicked women, following Sathans provocations, beleve and professe, that in the night times they ride abroad with Diana (i.e. Hecate), the goddessse of the *Pagans*, or else with *Herodias*, with an innumerable multitude, upon certaine beasts, and passe over manie countries and nations, in the silence of the night, and doo whatsoever those fairies or ladies command"—*Discoverie of Witchcraft*, bk. 3, ch. XVI. See *Comus*, 135; *Paradise Lost*, II. 663.

23. *corner*. Some interpret with reference to its etymological sense 'horn' (Lat. *cornu*); but there does not seem to be any evidence for this use; yet the word certainly suggests the classical *cornua luna* (cf. *Georgic* III. 433). Milton imitates the line in a passage of *Comus* that has several other Shakespearian echoes; cf. 1012—1017, where the Attendant Spirit bids farewell:

"But now my task is smoothly done:  
I can fly, or I can run,  
Quickly to the green earth's end,  
Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,  
And from thence can soar as soon  
To the corners of the moon."

24. *There hangs* etc. "Classical magic ascribed to the moon certain exudations (*virus lunare*) which, under the spells of the enchanter, were shed upon earthly objects"—*Herford*.



*profound*; variously interpreted in the literal sense, 'deep, hence ready to fall,' and in the figurative senses (1) 'having deep or hidden qualities,' or (2) 'full of meaning and import.' The literal sense seems better.

*vaporous drop profound.* The order of the words—a noun placed between two qualifying words—is a favourite with Milton; cf. *Lycidas*, 6, "Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear." The idiom is Greek; in his note on the *Lycidas* line Mr Jerram quotes Euripides, *Phænissæ*, 234, *νιφόβολου δρος ἰρόν* ('snowclad mount divine,' viz. Parnassus). Gray probably borrowed the device from Milton; cf. his *Elegy*, 53, "Full many a gem of purest ray serene." Cf. also Tennyson's early poems, in which the influence of Milton is very noticeable; e.g. *The Lotos-Eaters*, VII., "With half-dropt eyelid still," and *The Palace of Art*, "In diverse raiment strange."

27. *artificial sprites*; the "Apparitions" of Act IV. Scene 1.

29. *confusion*, destruction; cf. II. 3. 48.

30. *He shall spurn fate*; cf. Macbeth's own challenge to destiny, III. 1. 71, 72.

32. *security*, carelessness, false confidence; the state of a man whose "hopes" make him deaf to the warnings alike of wisdom, conscience, and fear (31).

33. "*Come away, come away*"; see p. 257.

34. *my little spirit*, i.e. her attendant familiar spirit.

## Scene 6.

Another of those valuable side-scenes (cf. II. 4) of comment and preparation. Not of high dramatic interest itself, it contributes to the evolution of the drama by telling us what is being done by the characters through whose instrumentality the *dénouement* must be brought about; cf. 24—49. It shows, too, how the destruction of Banquo is working to Macbeth's own destruction. From the presence of Macbeth's thanes at the banquet (III. 4) we may suppose that he passed successfully through the crisis after Duncan's death; thanks, no doubt, in great measure to the flight of Duncan's sons, which not only left Macbeth's path to the throne unimpeded, but gave colour to his explanation of Duncan's murder (II. 4. 22—29, III. 1. 30—33). But the prediction of the Witches (I. 3. 65—67) drove him to the murder of Banquo, and the second deed of bloodshed was too much for public credulity to accept like the first (cf. 6, 7). Great nobles such as

“Lennox and another Lord” are alarmed for themselves (32—39); Macduff has fled to England, and the “suffering country” but waits for its deliverer. And it is Macbeth’s second crime that has awakened old and created new fears—as we see in the cautious but ironical speech of Lennox. Moreover, after the banquet-scene Macbeth is more desperate, and so alienates and outrages the whole land by his deeds (IV. 2, IV. 3. 4—8, 155—164). Thus the murder of Banquo quickens into activity the forces which compass Macbeth’s ultimate fall. As regards the dramatic structure, the scene serves to bridge the interval between the last appearance of the Witches and Macbeth’s promised visit to them.

3. *borne*, managed; cf. 17.

*gracious*; cf. 10, I. 7. 16—20, II. 3. 76 (“grace”).

4. *he was dead*; when pity cost Macbeth nothing.

8. *Who cannot want the thought...?* who can fail to think?

The double negative form has the same intensive force as in the cases of two negatives or of a negative after some verb which implies negation. Strictly, Lennox should have said *who cannot have the thought* or *who can want [=lack] the thought*. But though the combination of the two forms of expression will not bear logical analysis, it is nevertheless perfectly clear in its emphasis. “Constructions according to the sense”—what Coleridge calls “the grammar of passion”—necessarily play a large part in all spoken (i.e. not written) utterances, such as those of the drama. Changes, e.g. “who can want” etc., are thoroughly bad because they ignore the fundamental fact that this tendency to repeat a negative is a general principle of language, and may be illustrated not from Shakespeare’s work alone.

*monstrous*; for the intrusive *e*-sound (*monst-e-rous*) cf. *rememb-e-rance*, III. 2. 30; *child-e-ren*, IV. 3. 172.

10. *fact*, deed (Lat. *factum*); especially in Shakespeare an evil deed, as here. The same word as *feat* (O.F. *fait*, Lat. *factum*).

13. *thralls*; see G.

19. *an*; see G.

21. *broad*, free; implying ‘free-spoken.’ Cf. III. 4. 23.

22. *tyrant*. I do not believe that there is any valid ground for supposing that Shakespeare used this word in the Greek sense of *τύραννος* = ‘a usurper.’ The passage in 3 *Henry VI*. III. 3. 69—72 proves nothing, because no one can say who wrote what parts of that play: a marked piece of classical knowledge there points to Marlowe as the author of a scene. Shakespeare, indeed, probably had more Latin

than Ben Jonson's epitaph credited him with; but one would not care to assume that his knowledge of Greek extended very far.

24. *bestows himself*; cf. III. I. 30.

29—31. For Macduff's flight to England see **Extract 17** from Holinshed.

30. *upon his aid*, in aid of him (Duncan's son, Malcolm).

31. *wake*, raise, call to arms.

35. *Free*, remove. "He is thinking of the Murderer who appeared at Macbeth's banquet to report Banquo's assassination." (F.)

36. *faithful*, loyal, i.e. to the rightful king.

*homage*; O.F. *homage*, Late Lat. *homaticum*, 'the service of a vassal or man (Lat. *homo*) to his lord.'

*receive...honours*; perhaps Shakespeare had in mind the earldoms bestowed by Malcolm; cf. v. 8. 62—64.

38. *the king*, Macbeth; the 1st Folio has *their*, which might perhaps mean Malcolm and Macduff.

40. i.e. having received a positive refusal.

41. *cloudy*, i.e. vexed, angry; cf. 2 *Henry VI.* III. I. 154, 155:

"Beaufort's red sparkling eyes blab his heart's malice,  
And Suffolk's cloudy brow his stormy hate."

*turns me*; the so-called ethic dative; cf. *Julius Cæsar* (also a descriptive passage), I. 2. 265—268: "Marry,...when he perceived the common herd was glad he refused the crown, he plucked me ope his doublet and offered them his throat to cut." In such passages the pronoun has the force 'look you!' 'mark this!'

42. *as who should say*. Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, I. I. 93, "As who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle.'" *As who*, like one who; cf. F. *comme qui dirait*, i.e. *celui qui*. Probably *who* in 'as who should say' was originally an indefinite pronoun='anyone, someone,' the whole phrase being used parenthetically like our common phrase 'as one might say.' But in Shakespeare's use of the phrase *who* seems to be a relative with the implied antecedent 'one or he who.' See Abbott, p. 175.

44, 45. i.e. to get as far as possible out of Macbeth's reach.

48, 49. i.e. our country *suffering under* a hand, etc. Such inversions are common; cf. *Richard II.* III. I. 9, "A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments," i.e. a gentleman happy in. So in Milton; cf. *Paradise Lost*, I. 567, "With fixed anchor in his scaly rind." I think that the usage was a poetical variation, designed perhaps to give rather more emphasis to the epithet, as with an inversion like "dear my lord"; cf. III. 2. 27, note.

## ACT IV.

## Scene 1.

This scene, like the first and third (to line 37) scenes of the play, is a remarkable exemplification of what has been called the ritual of witchcraft. One of the most interesting parallels in dramatic literature to the Witches-element in *Macbeth* is the commencement of Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queens*, where the poet's own notes make up, with the references in the text, a very storehouse of classical and mediæval demonology. The ingredients of the Witches' caldron naturally consist of things venomous or loathsome.

1. *brinded*, brindled, streaked; see G.

2. *hedge-pig*, hedgehog. Another word for hedgehog is *urchin* (O.F. *ireçon*, Lat. *ericius*), and from the belief that evil spirits sometimes took the form of a hedgehog *urchin* came to mean a sprite, wicked elf, imp. Cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. 4. 49.

3. *Harpier*; the name of some demon; suggested perhaps by the word *harpy* (a winged monster of classical legend). Scot's *Discoverie* is full of such names, many of them taken from the Talmud or Hebrew commentaries on the Bible. The influence of that class of literature is seen clearly in Milton's descriptions of the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

"*'tis time*"; probably this should be printed as a quotation, i.e. as what Harpier cries out. But the sense might be 'Harpier calls to us: so it is time to begin the rites' (the call being taken as a signal).

6. *cold*; the scansion of a monosyllable like *cold* as two syllables is quite in accordance with Shakespearian practice, and solves the supposed difficulty of metre here. The needless insertion of *the* disarranges the inverted (or "trochaic") rhythm; *coldest* would be a preferable change metrically.

8. *venom*; Shakespeare several times speaks of toads as venomous; cf. the familiar lines in *As You Like It*, II. I. 12—14:

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

No doubt, "venomous" represented the popular belief in his time; there seems to be still some doubt on the point.

14—16. Neither the *newt* (a kind of lizard—see G.) nor the *blind-worm* (i.e. slow-worm) is harmful; but both were then thought to be noxious; cf. Herrick, "Nor snake or slow-worm bite thee" (*Hesperides*, 1648, "The Night-piece").

*Adder's fork*, i.e. forked tongue. When Titania goes to sleep, her fairy attendants sing (*A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, II. 2. 9—12):

"You spotted snakes *with double tongue*,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;  
*Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong*,  
Come not near our fairy queen."

17. *howlet*, owl; see G.

21. *Fire*; a dissyllable, as often; cf. *Richard II.* 1. 3. 294, "O, w<sup>h</sup>o | can h<sup>o</sup>ld | a f<sup>i</sup>re in | his h<sup>a</sup>nd." Scan here "F<sup>i</sup>-re | b<sup>u</sup>rn and | c<sup>a</sup>ldron | b<sup>u</sup>bble."

22. *dragon*; a fabulous sort of winged serpent; Lat. *draco*. The chariot of the Night was supposed to be drawn by dragons; cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III. 2. 379 (Pitt Press note).

23. *mummy*; "a preparation for magical purposes, made from dead bodies"—*Schmidt*.

Another writer notes that "Egyptian mummy, or what passed for it, was formerly a regular part of the *Materia Medica*." There appear to have been various kinds of *mummy* used in medicine, for different purposes, e.g. to stanch blood. Sir Thomas Browne (himself a doctor) said wittily: "The Egyptian mummies which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummie is become merchandise, Migrain cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams"—*Urn Burial*. (F.) "Thou art...but a salvatory of green mummy" is one of Bosola's fantastic retorts to the duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV. 2.

23. *maw...gulf*; synonyms for the stomach of animals. *Gulf* = 'maw' is simply a figurative use of *gulf* = 'an abyss; something that engulfs or swallows, like a whirlpool or the gullet.' O.F. *golfe*, Gk. *κόλπος*. Probably *gulf* is not connected with *gulp*, 'to swallow.'

24. *ravin'd*. The verb always means in Shakespeare 'to devour greedily' (II. 4. 28): hence *ravin'd* can hardly mean 'glutted with prey,' as some interpret. Probably it is active = 'ravenous,' literally 'full of ravining.' We have already noted (III. 4. 41, note) the free Elizabethan use of participial terminations. See G.

28. *Sliver'd*, torn off; see G. *in the moon's eclipse*. An eclipse was proverbially of evil omen, the precursor of troubles. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, I. 596—599; and *King Lear*, I. 2. 112 (the passage on "these late eclipses" that "portend no good to us"). Being an unlucky moment for beginning any lawful design, it was proportionately favourable to wicked schemes.

32. *slab*, slimy, glutinous. From *slab*, 'a puddle'; whence *slabby*, 'sloppy, dirty'; akin to *slobber*.

33. *chaudron*, entrails; see G.

37. Shakespeare accents *báboon* and *babóon*, as suits the metre.

43. "*Black spirits*"; see p. 258.

44. "It is a very ancient superstition that all sudden pains of the body, which could not naturally be accounted for, were presages of something that was shortly to happen"—*Steevens*.

50—61. *I conjure you* etc. Macbeth cares nothing for anybody or anything: his desire for knowledge must be gratified at all costs.

52, 53. For the power exercised over the winds by witches cf. I. 3. 11—17. *yesty*, foaming; see G.

55. *bladed*; the sense is probably 'in the blade,' i.e. at the leaf-stage—not 'in the green ear'; for *blade* means the green shoot or leaf before the corn is in ear.

*lodged*, beaten down, laid almost flat; cf. *Richard II.* III. 3. 162, "Our sighs and they [tears] shall lodge the summer corn," i.e. like wind and rain. So in *2 Henry VI.* III. 2. 176, "Like to the summer's corn by tempest lodged." The modern term is 'laid.'

59. *nature's germens*, all the seeds (Lat. *germina*) of life in the world. The 1st Folio has *germaine* (uncorrected in the 2nd); *germens* is a convincing correction. Cf. the similar passage in *King Lear*, III. 2. 8, where Lear, buffeted by the storm, apostrophises the thundér thus: "Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once." So in *The Winter's Tale*, IV. 4. 489, 490:

"Let nature crush the sides o' the earth together  
And mar the seeds within!"

The 1st Folio's reading is plainly impossible: *germaine* could only mean 'akin' (Lat. *germanus*) or 'a kinsman,' whereas a plural noun is here required. Nor would the change *germains* really help, for the sense would be 'nature's kinsmen' (as in *Othello*, I. 1. 114), not 'nature's kindred elements.' The *Lear* passage is conclusive on the point. (F.)

*tumble*; plural because *treasure* is treated as a collective noun = 'riches.'

60. *sicken*, i.e. grow weary of its own work of destroying.

65. *farrow*, litter; akin to Germ. *ferkel*, 'a young pig' and (remotely) to Lat. *porcus*.

68. *The Apparitions*. "The 'armed head' represents symbolically Macbeth's own, struck off by Macduff (see *stage direction* v. 8. 53); the 'bloody child' represents Macduff (see v. 8. 15); the 'child crowned with a tree in his hand' represents Malcolm, who gives the order to the soldiers to cut down the boughs of Birnam Wood (v. 4. 4)"—*Herford*.

Thunder accompanies the apparition of Ariel "like a harpy" in *The Tempest*, III. 3. 52.

70—72. Editors note that an injunction to silence is customary in all scenes of incantation; also that it was an ancient belief that spirits summoned to earth by means of spells were reluctant to answer questions and eager to be "dismissed." (F.)

So in *The Tempest*, IV. 1, just before the Masque of Spirits, Prospero says (59), "No tongue! all eyes! be silent." The idea of "dismissing" spirits is seen in the Epilogue to that play.

71—94. See **Extracts 15, 16**.

The rhyme in the speeches of the Apparitions gives them the appropriate effect of riddles.

74. *harp'd*, touched aright, hit; as a harpist touches the right string.

84. *a bond of*, a pledge from; so that he may have a hold over fate and feel sure of the fulfilment of the prophecy (80, 81).

88, 89. *round*; cf. I. 5. 26. *top*; used with the same figurative notion that 'crown' often bears, viz. 'summit, culminating point.' Perhaps *round* is intended to suggest the lower, encircling part of the crown, and *top* the upper, ornamental part. (F.)

93. *Dunsinane* is the accentuation here, but *Dunsináne* elsewhere in the play. Editors show that both accentuations have the authority of Scotch writers. (F.)

94—101. Rhymed because phrased in the same key as the supernatural speeches that have just gone before.

95. *impress*, force to take military service. Cf. the old system of 'press-gangs' for the navy. Shakespeare uses *press* and *impress* several times with this idea, e.g. in I *Henry IV*. I. 1. 21, where Henry is speaking of his desire to go on the Crusade,

"As far as to the sepulchre of Christ,  
Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross  
We are impressed and engaged to fight."

97. *Rebellion's head*; another of Theobald's fine corrections; the 1st Folio has *rebellious dead*. *Rebellion* is precisely what a usurper would fear; moreover, the train of thought is a continuation of lines 90, 91. Some think that the metaphor may be suggested to Macbeth by the "armed head" he has lately beheld. It seems, indeed, possible to keep closer to the Folio and read "*rebellious head*" = 'power of rebellion,' from *head* in the sense 'an armed force'; cf. phrases like 'to make head against,' 'to gather head.' (F.)

To retain *dead* and interpret it of Banquo is very far-fetched. Besides, Macbeth's speech up to line 100, where there is an obvious break, is wholly a comment on the Apparition's prophecy (90—94), and in that prophecy there is not a word which can be strained into a reference to the "dead": the sole idea of the speech is that Macbeth has nothing to fear from "conspiracy" and discontent, i.e. "rebellion," until a seemingly impossible thing happens.

99. *the lease of nature*, i.e. his allotted term of years. For the legal metaphor cf. 84 and III. 2. 49.

106. *noise*; Elizabethan writers often use *noise* = 'music,' and it is thought to have that sense here; cf. the stage-direction. "Soft music" accompanies the similar dumb "show" in *The Tempest*, III. 3. 82; see also *Cymbeline*, v. 4. 29. The *hautboy* is a soft wind-instrument.

III. *A show of Eight Kings*. "Banquo is reputed to have been an ancestor of the Stuarts. Walter Stuart married the grand-daughter of Robert Bruce, and their son was Robert II. His descendants, who sat upon the throne, were Robert III. and the six kings called James. Mary, daughter of James V., is omitted in the vision, as the Witches' prophecy related only to kings"—*Herford*.

One wonders how a scene like this could be managed on the bare Elizabethan stage. Its effectiveness hangs on illusion, and illusion needs scenic devices and elaboration. The purpose of the "show" is to introduce the famous lines (120, 121) in which the accession of King James to the English throne is pointedly referred to, in compliment to a monarch who relished compliments keenly. In a sense, indeed, the whole play may be regarded as a compliment to James. King James ("whose horror of crowds was notorious") is thought to be meant in the description of the ruler who withdraws himself from his subjects' gaze, *Measure for Measure*, I. 1. 67—72, II. 4. 27—30; and a fanciful theory represents him as the original (highly idealised) of Prospero in *The Tempest*.

112. *the spirit of Banquo*; the apparition at the banquet-scene,



which usurps in Macbeth's memory the place of Banquo as he had known him in life.

116. *Start, eyes!* He has already said that the sight of *one* king alone scorches his eyeballs (113): well may he, after seeing four, wish to be rid of his eyes altogether.

117. Dr Murray shows that *crack* was often applied to the roar of cannon (cf. I. 2. 37), the blast of a trumpet, and thunder. He explains *the crack of doom* as either "the thunder-peal of the day of judgment, or perhaps the blast of the archangel's trump." But the former is made the more probable by *The Tempest*, I. 2. 203, and *Titus Andronicus*, II. 1. 3 ("Secure of thunder's crack or lightning flash"). Cf. passages descriptive of the Judgment-day in *The Revelation*, e.g. in xi. 19, xvi. 18.

The verse, as Hunter says, "could not fail to be a most acceptable prediction to King James, as he looked on his two sons, the hope of his royal house, Henry and Charles." But the course of history was destined to invest the complimentary prediction with a grim "irony."

119. Mirrors and crystals, and glasses so cut as to produce an illusion when looked into, play an important part in magic. The Elizabethan term for such things was 'perspectives' (cf. *Twelfth Night*, v. 224, *Richard II.* II. 2. 18) or 'prospectives.' Roger Bacon's "glass" was celebrated (see Greene's play, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*). Dr Dee, of Trinity College, the most famous of Elizabethan professors of the black arts, was an expert in crystals.

This use of the "glass" is an expedient by which Shakespeare suggests to the imagination the long line of other kings whom it would have been tedious to bring on the stage.

121. The *ball* is "the globe, part of the king's insignia. In 1542 Henry VIII. took the title of King of Ireland. When James VI. of Scotland came to the English throne the three sceptres were united. Thus he alone of the eight could carry 'two-fold balls and treble sceptres'"—*Herford*.

For *ball* cf. *Henry V.* IV. 1, where Henry enumerates all the emblems and attributes of sovereignty and says it is not they that can bring a monarch rest (277, 278):

"'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,

The sword, the mace, the crown imperial" etc.

Now as the ball and the sceptre are equally symbols of sovereignty, the reason for the distinction "*twofold* balls...*treble* sceptres" is not at first sight quite clear. Maybe that the sceptre, being the easier to bear

of the two emblems and therefore used on occasions when the ball was not produced, was regarded as typical of all aspects of kingship; while the ball was specially associated with the greatest event in a monarch's career, namely, his coronation. If this be so—if the sceptre was a general, and the ball a particular, symbol—then the explanation that “*twofold balls*” refers to the double coronation of James, at Scone and at Westminster, is right. Some, however, think that the “*twofold balls*”=the two islands, Great Britain and Ireland, and the “*treble sceptres*”=the three kingdoms, England with Wales, Scotland and Ireland. (F.)

123. *blood-bolter'd*, having his locks matted with clots of blood; see *bolter* in G.

126. The only line where the accentuation *Macbeth* occurs. *amazedly*; see II. 3. 91.

127. *sprites*. Some editors retain the 1st Folio's spelling, *sprights*, as *sprites* is suggestive of the supernatural; either way, the sense is *spirits*=feelings, state of mind.

130. *antic round*, a fantastic round-dance. *antic*; see G.

132. Said, of course, in mocking irony; see 48 for Macbeth's “welcome” of them.

138. *infected*; as with the plague. In Shakespeare *infect* and its derivatives often have this notion of plague.

144. “To *anticipate* is here to *prevent*, by taking away the opportunity”—*Johnson*.

145. *slightly*, swift to take flight beyond one's reach. We have seen what his “purpose” was (83, 84).

148. *the firstlings*, the first product of, signifying here the first thoughts or deeds of. *Firstling*, like Germ. *erstling*, means literally ‘the first of its kind to be produced...the first product.’

153. *trace*, follow; the metaphor of following footsteps.

155. *sights!* The whole scene has teemed with “apparitions” and “shows” and “sights” (122); yet some would change *sights* to *flights*, as though Macbeth meant, “nobody shall again have an opportunity of taking flight,” like Macduff. The Folio's reading is confirmed by the whole tenour of the scene, and by the fact that Macbeth has himself cursed his intercourse with the Witches (133—135, 138, 139). It fits his present frame of mind that he should renounce all further dealing with them, whatever the future may hold for him, and *sights* is simply an echo of his recent experiences. (F.)

## Scene 2.

A critic says: "To omit this scene, as is usually the case on the stage, is to present Macbeth's character in a far more favourable light than Shakespeare intended, and to weaken the force of Macduff's cries of agony, and Lady Macbeth's heart-piercing question in the sleep-walking scene. We must be made to see how far Macbeth's unavailing bloodthirstiness reaches, which spares not even innocent women and children. Moreover, in this tragedy of hypocritical treachery and faithless ambition, Macduff and his wife are the exponents of honest loyalty and domestic virtue," and so form the necessary contrast. (F.)

The part with the child is the one bit of pure pathos in the play: "a pathos which clings about all Shakespeare's portraits of children"—Symons. Compare Prince Arthur in *King John*.

1. Macduff's flight appears at first sight to merit his wife's censure. But we see later that he acted from patriotic motives, not from cowardice or selfishness or want of affection. He felt that the time was ripe for rebellion: Malcolm had but to come forward, supported by England, and the whole country would rise against the usurper. So, for Scotland's sake, Macduff had no choice but to seek Malcolm at the English court. Cf. his own words: "And I must be from thence!" (IV. 3. 207).

7. *titles*, possessions; literally 'the things to which he has a title' (i.e. a title of ownership).

9. *the natural touch*, natural affection: he is unnatural (she says) in his lack of feeling for wife and children. *Touch* is a word of varied signification in Shakespeare; it sometimes means 'sensation, feeling,' the context defining the particular feeling—here affection. Cf. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. 7. 18, "Didst thou but know the inly touch of love"; and *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. 2. 103, "I know no touch of consanguinity."

17. *fits*; perhaps 'crises'; some interpret 'caprices.' The metaphor (i.e. from some illness) is shown by *Coriolanus*, III. 2. 33, "The violent fit o' the time craves it as physic."

19. *know ourselves*, i.e. to be traitors. Macduff had been forced by national circumstances to act in a way which made him appear a "traitor" (44—50) to his family (3, 4): yet he did not "know himself" to be a "traitor," did not feel himself to be one.

19, 20. *when we hold rumour* etc.; when we interpret every report

in the light of (or 'under the influence of') our fears, yet cannot define those fears and say what it is that we dread.

On the eve of some national crisis, like a Revolution, the atmosphere is charged with a vague alarm and expectancy, though people might find it hard to say what precisely it is that they fear: and this condition of undefined anxiety colours their view of everything and makes them interpret unfavourably every fresh rumour. Cf. the stories that are told about the early days of the French Revolution, when a general feeling of 'What next?' prevailed.

*hold*; not 'hold true,' but simply 'judge, estimate' and so 'interpret.'

22. *Each way and move*; literally 'every way and movement' (of the sea); that is 'in every direction, according to the current.' It is the picture of a rudderless ship drifting about at the sport of the waves.

The difficulty made over the passage seems to have arisen through taking *move* as a verb and connecting it with "float." To say that they "float and move" is absurd: for they could not "float upon a wild and violent sea" without moving. But to say that they float to and fro with every shifting of the current is surely good sense, and an interpretation that may fairly be placed on the words. The only objection is that *move* does not occur elsewhere as a noun (= *movement*) in Shakespeare. Among the many emendations the least objectionable is "*And each way move.*" More ingenious is "*Each way and wave.*" But as is generally the case, the Folio's text is vastly preferable to the tamperings. (F.)

29. i.e. he would give way to his feelings.

30. *Sirrah*; not always, though commonly, a contemptuous form of address.

36. *Poor*; emphatic.

65. i.e. though I am perfectly acquainted with your noble name and position.

66. *doubt*, fear.

70. *To do worse*, i.e. by not warning her. *fell*; see G.

73—76. Dr Brandes comments on the bitter pessimism of such passages as this and IV. 3. 218, 219, and sees in it a reflection of the feelings of Shakespeare himself during the dark period to which *Macbeth* belongs.

77. *womanly*; the word could not now be used in the depreciatory sense required here, viz. weak, womanish.

82. *shag-car'd*, with shaggy, hairy ears. So the 1st Folio reads,

and there does not seem to be any absolute necessity for the change to "shag-hair'd," which many, however, adopt. "Shag-haired" occurs in 2 *Henry VI.* III. 1. 367, and editors show that *hair* was often spelt *heer* in Elizabethan works: still the original reading in this line is *card* or *ear'd*, not *hear'd*. The alteration does not strike me as a convincing one.

### Scene 3.

Dramatically this scene seems at first sight more open to criticism than any other in the play. Its absolute dramatic interest is hardly in proportion to its length. Its main purpose—what constitutes its relation to the whole scheme of the drama—is to show us from what quarter and how vengeance is coming on Macbeth; and the crime perpetrated in the last scene becomes here the final incentive to the avengers. This is matter directly germane to the development of the action, and through it all runs the vein of wonderful "irony" which springs from Macduff's ignorance of the fate of his own wife and children. Still, it does not, to my mind, fully account for the length of the scene.

The real design is, I think, to mark the pause before the storm. No dramatic theme remains except the great avengement, which is to fall in different ways on husband and wife in accordance with the different operation of crime in their lives. But to bring about the avengement suddenly would violate probability. Macbeth as the reigning monarch has still powers at his command, and rebellion takes time to work. The *dénouement*, therefore, must be led up to gradually; there must be an antecedent period in which the storm-clouds gather: and this long scene, as it were, fills the period. Time-illusion is one of the essentials of dramatic construction.

In the interview between Malcolm and Macduff, Shakespeare has followed Holinshed very closely. See **Extracts 18—22.**

4. *Bestride*, defend; the metaphor of a soldier standing over a fallen comrade and defying the enemy to touch him. Cf. 2 *Henry IV.* 1. 1. 207, "Tells them he doth bestride a bleeding land."

*birthdom*, inheritance, birthright; it can hardly mean 'land of our birth, mother-country.'

8. *Like syllable of dolour*, a similar cry of pain (Lat. *dolor*, 'pain, grief').

10. *to friend*, friendly, favourable. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, III. 1. 143, "I know that we shall have him well to friend" (meaning that Antony

will not oppose the conspirators). From *to* = 'equivalent to,' 'for.' Cf. the *Prayer-Book*, "I take thee to my wedded wife."

14, 15. *something You may deserve*, i.e. you may win Macbeth's favour for yourself by betraying me. The 1st Folio has *discerne*, which can scarcely be strained into meaning 'you may see something to your advantage' to be gained from him. Theobald's correction *deserve* is generally adopted.

*and wisdom*, and *it is* wisdom, wise policy. The omission is awkward because there is no preceding verb from which *is* can be easily understood. Two peculiar points occurring in the same line suggest some corruption of text.

19, 20. *A good and virtuous nature* etc.; "a good mind may *recede* from goodness in the execution of a royal commission" (office order)—*Johnson*. The idea in *recoil* is 'to fall off, grow degenerate, go back'; cf. *Cymbeline*, I. 6. 126—128:

"Be revenged;

Or she that bore you was no queen, and you

Recoil from your great stock."

21. *transpose*, change. Macduff *may* be honest in spite of Malcolm's suspicions: the fact that he suspects Macduff does not make Macduff a traitor, does not change his character, if he is honest. Cf. 30, 31.

22. *the brightest*, Lucifer (Satan); of whom "bright" (or an equivalent) is essentially *the* Miltonic description, based on mediæval tradition; cf. indeed the name *Lucifer*. (See the Appendix on Milton's conception of Satan, Pitt Press ed. of *Paradise Lost*, I. 11.)

23, 24. *Though all things foul* etc.; Virtue could not change her appearance even if all things base chose to assume the appearance of Virtue (and thereby made that appearance hateful to Virtue herself and distrusted by men).

24. *my hopes*; "i.e. hopes of welcome from Malcolm, who withholds it from distrust, aroused by Macduff's abandonment of wife and children"—*Herford*.

25. *there*; in that action of yours (cf. 26) which has excited my suspicions about you.

26. *in that rawness*, so precipitately; without taking thought for the safety of your family. So the soldier William in *Henry V.* IV. 1. 147, speaks of the "children rawly left," i.e. left unprovided for by their fathers who have fallen in battle.

27. *motives*, influences.

29, 30. *Let not my jealousies* etc.; I pray you see in my suspicions

the wish, not to discredit you, but simply to guard my own safety in all points. For *jealousies* cf. *Hamlet*, IV. 5. 19, 20:

“So full of artless jealousy is guilt,  
It spills [i.e. destroys] itself in fearing to be spilt.”

33. *wear thou thy wrongs*, enjoy the fruit of your crimes, enjoy your ill-won gains; the person addressed being “tyranny,” not the remoter noun “poor country.” The metaphor perhaps is ‘dress yourself out in your ill-gained plumes.’

34. *The title*, i.e. the title (=claim) you put forward to them; *thy* is a needless change.

*affeer'd*, confirmed; see G. To speak, in strictly legal language, of a “title” to that which has been gained wrongfully is an *oxymoron*.

43. *England*, the king of England.

46—49. For Malcolm’s motive in dissembling thus see **Extract 18** (last lines).

49. *What*, what sort of a man? *should*, could.

52. *open’d*; like buds; the metaphor is suggested by “grafted” (51).

55. *confineless harms*, boundless vices.

58. *Luxurious*, lustful; see G.

59. *Sudden*, capricious; or ‘violent, passionate.’

62. *continent*, restraining; the metaphor of river-banks; cf. *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, II. I. 92, “That they have overborne their continents,” i.e. banks (where “they”=flooded rivers).

65. *In nature*; the words probably go with “intemperance,” the sense being ‘intemperate indulgence of the appetites.’

69. *Convey*, secretly manage, stealthily indulge in. *Convey* often has a bad sense in Shakespeare, e.g. as a colloquial word for ‘steal’; cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I. 3. 30—33: “*Nym*. The good humour is to steal. *Pistol*. ‘Convey,’ the wise call it. ‘Steal’! foh! a fico for the phrase!”

We find *convey*=‘to act stealthily,’ and *conveyance*=‘dishonesty, trickery.’ Cf. *King Lear*, I. 2. 109, 110, “I will convey the business,” i.e. manage the plot; and 3 *Henry VI*. III. 3. 160, “Thy sly conveyance and thy lord’s false love.”

70. *the time*; cf. I. 5. 61.

72. *ill-composed affection*, inordinate desires.

75. *his*, one man’s.

77. *that*, so that.

80. *Sticks*, is rooted; cf. III. I. 50.

81. *summer-seeming lust*; literally 'lust that seems like a summer,' hence 'that may be likened to a summer,' i.e. in shortness of duration. The short-lived plant lust is contrasted with the deep-rooted avarice which, like some tree, grows stronger with age. The other obvious point of likeness between "lust" and "summer" may also be implied. Other explanations given are: "appearing like summer; seeming to be the effect of a transitory and short-lived heat of the blood"; and "befitting summer"—but Shakespeare never uses *seem* = *beseem*. "Summer-teeming" and "summer-seeding" are gratuitous changes. (F.)

83, 84. *foisons*, plenty, abundance, implying not harvests alone but wealth in general, resources. *mere*, very, absolutely. See each in G.

Malcolm's own wealth will be enough to satisfy his avarice, however great, without his needing to filch other people's possessions.

84, 85. i.e. all these evil qualities ("evils," 57) are endurable if counterbalanced by other and good qualities.

87. *temperance*; contrast 64, 65.

88. Shakespeare always spells and accents *persever*, and *perseverance*.

91. *In the division of*, in all the different shades of.

93. *the sweet milk of concord*; cf. I. 5. 15.

94. *confound*, destroy; as in II. 2. 12.

99. *bloody-scepter'd*; referring to "nation." We might paraphrase: 'ruled by the blood-stained sceptre of a usurper.'

103. *blaspheme*; literally 'to speak profanely, utter impiety' (= Gk. *βλασφημεῖν*), hence 'to speak evil of, to calumniate, cast a slur on.'

106. *Died*, i.e. prepared herself for death by a life that was dead to the vanities of the world. It is the same idea of self-mortification as in V. 2. 5. The form of the expression is thought to be due to I Cor. xv. 31, "I die daily." *Fare*; two syllables.

109. *passion*; cf. III. 4. 57, and see G.

113. *trains*, allurements, artifices; see G.

120. *For*, as.

128. *here-approach*; cf. 143.

129. *Old Siward*; see **Extract 23**.

130. *at a point*; said to be simply a variation of the not uncommon phrase *at point* = 'ready equipped, fully prepared for any emergency' (F. *à point*). Goneril, speaking ironically, says of Lear's body-guard (I. 4. 345—347):

"a hundred knights!

'Tis politic and safe to let him keep

At point a hundred knights."



131, 132. *and the chance of goodness* etc.; and may the future of virtue be in accordance with the justice of our cause: *we*, he means, represent the cause of goodness (for has he not just claimed to be a *good* man?), and may that cause prevail in proportion to its justice.

I think that *chance* means simply 'fortune: how goodness fares in the struggle, whether well or ill': and that *goodness* means 'virtue, right,' exactly as in Macduff's speech (33), which may linger unconsciously in Malcolm's thoughts. It seems to me that *goodness* could not have any other sense at the end of a dialogue in which (from line 44) the dominant thought has been the contrast between "vices" (47, 51, 55, 57, 133) and "graces" (=virtue). Malcolm has attributed to himself all sorts of vices, and then, suddenly throwing off the mask, claims for himself the corresponding virtues; and here, seeing perhaps the incredulity of Macduff (129, 130), he reiterates his claim and says that his is the cause of *goodness*.

The interpretation 'chance of *success*' is to my mind most improbable, there being no passage in Shakespeare where *goodness* bears that meaning: even if *goodness*, not *redemption* (as the Quartos read), be right in *Richard III.* I. 4. 194, the sense is simply 'blessing.' Indeed, the use of *goodness* = 'good fortune, prosperity,' is very rare; the *New E. Dict.* gives only two instances, each from a theological writer long antecedent to Shakespeare, and in each case the sense is 'general prosperity,' not 'success' in a particular work.

135—151. The whole passage is another compliment to King James, who had continued the practice of "touching" for the King's Evil (scrofula). The compliment is most striking (*a*) from its irrelevance (for Shakespeare has obviously gone out of his way to introduce the subject), and (*b*) from contemporary circumstances, political and personal. See p. 259.

The description of Edward the Confessor is in Holinshed: "As hath bin thought he was enspired with the gift of Prophecie, and also to haue hadde the gift of healing infirmities and diseases. Namely, he vsed to help those that were vexed with the disease, commonly called the Kyngs euill, and left that vertue as it were a portion of inheritance vnto his successors the Kyngs of this Realme." (F.)

137, 138. *convincés The great assay of art*, baffles the utmost efforts of medical skill. For *convince* = to 'overcome, defeat,' see I. 7. 64. *assay*; literally 'attempt,' hence 'effort'; see G. and cf. the old Chaucerian phrase 'to do his *assay*' = to put forth all his might, do his very best.

140. *presently*, at once.

144. *solicits*; not merely 'petitions' but 'moves by his petitions,' so that his prayers on behalf of the afflicted ("visited") prevail. (F.)

147. *mere*, utter, absolute; see G.

148. *Hanging a golden stamp*. "Each person touched received a gold coin. Sir Thomas Browne wrote sixty years later: 'The King's Purse knows that the King's Evil grows more common'"—*Herford*. In King James's time the coin given was an "angel" (the name which the Elizabethans are constantly quibbling on), worth 10s.; afterwards a gold medal was substituted. See p. 259.

149. *holy prayers*; a form of service for the ceremony of "touching" appeared in the *Prayer-Book* as late as 1719.

151. *the healing benediction*, the blessed gift, the grace of healing. From the primary sense 'the utterance of a blessing' *benediction* comes to mean 'blessing carried into practical effect, blessedness; kindly favour, grace.' *virtue*, power, efficacy.

155. *My countryman*; judging by Ross's dress—*Stevens*.

159. *where it did*, i.e. is (= "stands") it in as unhappy a state as when Macduff fled?

163. *rent*; so the 1st Folio, and there seems to be no need to change what was an undoubted Elizabethan form of *rend*; cf. the Bible, 1611, *Mat.* vii. 6, "lest they...turn again and *rent* you."

165. *A modern ecstasy*, quite a commonplace disturbance of mind; great perturbation of spirit such as you may see any day of the week. *modern*; see G.

166. *for who*; grammatically this must be classed as an instance of the omitted inflexion; but the form of the question may be affected by the idea 'who is it?'

168. *or ere*; see G. *relation*, report, account.

169. *nice*, particular, precise; Ross has described the situation so *very* precisely, e.g. in the last lines, where the time is fixed to within an hour or so. See *relation* and *nice* in G.

170. *doth hiss*, i.e. causes him to be hissed for telling stale news.

174. *at peace*; so Macbeth, speaking of Duncan, III. 2. 20. Of all the examples of verbal "irony" in the play this seems to me the most terrible.

176. Note how he still delays to speak the fearful tidings.

178. *out*, up in arms, in the field; literally 'away from their homes.' Scotch writers like Mr Lang constantly use the expression "were out" in speaking of those who took part in the 1745 rebellion.

180. *power*, army; more often *powers*.  
 184. *gracious England*; cf. 43.  
 187. *gives out*, tells of; some interpret 'shows.'  
 189. *would*, should, ought to be.  
 190. *latch*, catch; see G.

191. *The general cause*; cf. *Julius Cæsar*, II. I. 11, 12, where Brutus, dwelling on the reasons that seem to make Cæsar's death necessary, says to himself:

"I know no personal cause to spurn at him,  
 But for the general (i.e. *cause*='the public weal')."

*a fee-grief*; a sorrow peculiar to one person: literally "a grief held 'in fee' by a single owner"—*Herford*. See G.; and add this to the list of legal terms in *Macbeth*.

197. *possess*, fill.

201. *on the quarry of*; the literal idea is 'on top of the heap made by the bodies of these slaughtered deer.' Ross means that to describe how it all was done would be to kill Macduff himself and thus increase the heap of slain by another body. Cf. the close of *Hamlet*, v. 2, where Fortinbras, pointing to the dead bodies of Hamlet and the others, speaks of them as "this quarry" (375). See *quarry* in G.

204, 205. This is another of the favourite Elizabethan aphorisms which owe their origin to Seneca. Cf. the *Hippolytus*, 607: "*curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*." Collier says: "The following is from Montaigne's *Essays*, by Florio, b. i. ch. 2, a work of which it is known Shakespeare had a copy, and of which he certainly elsewhere [in *The Tempest*, II. I. 147—164, Gonzalo's ideal "commonwealth"] made use:—"All passions that may be tasted and digested are but mean and slight:

*Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.*

Light cares can freely speake,

Great cares heart rather breake.'" (F.)

It seems highly probable that Shakespeare had Florio's version of the line in mind; for note that the idea "break" common to both writers is not conveyed by the original, *stupent* (= 'are dazed'; another reading being *silent* = 'are silent').

211. *He has no children*, i.e. Malcolm; a *father* would not offer such comfort to a father at such a moment. See p. 261.

*Macbeth* "has several of those memorable condensations of a great matter into a little compass, of which Macduff's 'he has no children!' is perhaps the most famous in literature"—*Symons*.

215. *Dispute it*, fight against it; do not be overcome by your sorrow.

218. *look on*; implying 'indifferently, like an idle spectator.'

220. *naught*, wicked, worthless; see G.

224. *Convert*, change; intransitive.

227. *intermission*, delay, i.e. in their meeting.

230. *Heaven forgive him too!* if he is fortunate enough to escape my sword, let him enjoy a second blessing, viz. Heaven's forgiveness.

231. *tune*; all modern editors adopt this correction of the 1st Folio's *time*. There can be little doubt that *time* was often misprinted *tune* from its resemblance in MS., and *vice versa*. Thus *time*, not *tune*, is certainly the right reading in *King John*, III. 3. 26. (F.)

Some editors think that the Folio makes the same mistake in *Twelfth Night*, II. 3. 100.

232. *Our lack is nothing but our leave*, all we now need is to take leave.

234. *Put on*, incite, encourage. *their instruments*, i.e. himself and his supporters, who are to be the instruments by which Providence executes vengeance on Macbeth.

## ACT V.

### Scene 1.

Speaking of the sleep-walking scene (the ambition and despair of all great tragic actresses) Dr Bucknill says: "Whether the deep melancholy of remorse often tends to exhibit itself in somnambulism, is a fact which, on scientific grounds, may be doubted." (F.)

Mr Moulton characterises as the three main features of Lady Macbeth's delirium: (1) "the mere reproduction of the horrible scenes she has passed through;" (2) "the struggle to keep her husband from betraying himself;" (3) "the uprising of her feminine nature against the foulness of the deed." And we may add her fear of the after-death: "Hell is murky."

As regards the purpose of the prose in this scene see p. 277.

4. *went into the field*, took the field, i.e. at the outset of the troubles in his kingdom; now he has had to fall back on his castle (V. 2. 12).

5. *nightgown*; cf. II. 2. 70.

6. *paper*; perhaps a reminiscence of Macbeth's letter (I. 5). (F.)

10. *the effects of watching*, deeds which she would do in her waking hours.

20. *stand close*, i.e. keep concealed; Lady Macbeth might chance to wake and then discover that she was being watched.

25. *their sense is shut*; the 1st Folio has *are*, probably a mistaken repetition of *are* just above. In a verse-passage we might say that *sense* was put for *senses*, an abbreviation which does sometimes occur for metrical convenience with nouns terminating in *s*, *se*, *ss*, *ce*; a probable example being *princess*' in *The Tempest*, I. 2. 173. But the explanation cannot apply to a prose-passage. Some consider the plural verb "attracted" to the plural notion "eyes" (cf. "their").

43, 44. *you mar all with this starting*; a recollection of the banquet-scene (III. 4. 63).

50. *Arabia*; traditionally in poetry the land of perfumes and spices. Cf. Pope's description of Belinda's dressing-table (*The Rape of the Lock*):

"This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,  
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box."

61, 62. Cf. II. 2. 65—72.

64. *Even so?* An exclamation of surprise at her revelation of the second crime.

75, 76. *annoyance*, harming herself; see G. *still*, constantly. His warning, apparently, was disregarded (v. 8. 70, 71).

77. *mated*, bewildered, confounded; see G.

### Scene 2.

1. *power*, army; cf. IV. 3. 180.

3. *dear*, grievous, heart-felt; causes that touch them closely; see G.

4. *the bleeding...alarm*, the summons to arms and bloodshed; see *alarm* in G.

5. *the mortified man*; "even the devout ascetic, dead to all natural sympathies"—*Herford*; perhaps rather, 'dead to all passions,' such as the feelings of revenge that burn in Malcolm and Macduff. Most editors take *mortified* figuratively, not in the literal (and very rare) sense 'dead,' 'slain.' Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. I. 28—31, where the courtier Dumain, having agreed to withdraw from the world, says to the King:

“My loving lord, Dumain is *mortified*:  
 The grosser manner of these world’s delights  
 He throws upon the gross world’s baser slaves:  
 To love, to wealth, to pomp, I pine and *die*.”

So in an old play *Monsieur D’Olive* (1606), “He like a mortified hermit sits,” and in Greene’s *Never Too Late* (1616), “I perceive in the words of the hermit the perfect idea of a *mortified man*.” Such passages seem conclusive. (F.)

7, 8. This was probably suggested by the fact that Holinshed does not mention Donalbain in connection with Macbeth’s overthrow. Lines 7 and 8 give a touch of circumstantiality to the narrative.

8. *file*; III. 1. 95, 102.

10. *unrough*, smooth-faced, hairless.

11. *Protest their first of manhood*, i.e. for the first time give evidence of it; show that they have reached man’s estate.

12. *Dunsinane...fortifies*; see **Extract 24**.

15, 16. *He cannot buckle* etc.; he cannot keep his cause in hand; his side or party is so deranged (“distemper’d”) as to be beyond his control; hence the desertion of his nominal followers (18). Nothing is gained by substituting *course* (‘course of action’) for *cause*; the latter is a comprehensive word for Macbeth’s party and affairs and all that pertains to him.

For the metaphor in *buckle...belt* editors compare *Troilus and Cressida*, II. 2. 30, “And buckle in a waist most fathomless”; the notion ‘to fasten in, confine,’ leads naturally to the general idea ‘to control, keep in hand.’ (F.)

18. *minutely*, every moment.

23. *pester’d*, troubled.

24, 25. *When all that is within him* etc.; “when all the faculties of the mind are employed in self-condemnation”—*Johnson*.

27—29. *Meet we the medicine of* etc.; let us go to meet the physician (Malcolm) who comes to cure the nation’s sickness, and with him let us shed every drop of our blood to purge our country of the tyrant.

For *medicine*=‘physician’ cf. *All’s Well That Ends Well*, II. 1. 75, 76:

“I have seen a medicine  
 That’s able to breathe life into a stone.”

## Scene 3.

1. *let them fly all*; cf. 7, 8 and v. 2. 18.

3. *taint*, be infected with; the metaphor of catching a disease.

8. *epicures*, men given to luxury of all kinds. A hardy northerner might well speak thus of the more luxurious nation south of the Tweed.

Shakespeare obviously had in mind passages in Holinshed that speak of "those superfluities which came into the realme of Scotland with the Englishmen"—such as "fine fare" and "English likerous delicats"—*Steevens*.

*epicure*; from the name of *Epicurus*, the Greek philosopher whose teaching was misinterpreted as inculcating the pursuit of sensual pleasures.

9. *sway by*, am moved by; or 'rule by.'

10. *sag*, sink, droop; see G.

11. *loon*; a word used more by the Scotch than the English; Middle E. *lown*, 'a base fellow,' which is the form we get in the stanza in *Othello*, II. 3. 92—95, quoted from the old ballad "King Stephen was a worthy peer."

15. *lily-liver'd*; cf. *King Lear*, II. 2. 18. In *Henry V.* III. 2. 34, 35, the Boy describes the bibulous coward Bardolph as "white-livered and red-faced; by the means whereof a' faces it out, but fights not." So *milk-livered* in *Lear*, IV. 2. 50. The liver was regarded as the seat of courage, and a white, bloodless liver as a sign of cowardice. The idea is part of the belief that the redness of the blood is a test of courage; so a coward is called a 'milk-sop,' i.e. "white-livered." As with many old medical notions, there is an element of truth in this belief; for courage generally goes with strength, and strength depends on the quality of the blood. *patch*, fool; see G.

20. *push*; some interpret 'attack, onset,' from the literal sense 'thrust.' But 'crisis' seems to me possible. However we take line 21, I do not think that *push* retains its literal sense.

21. *Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now*. It is doubtful whether any of the three suggested versions of the line gives us what Shakespeare wrote.

(1) The 1st Folio has *dis-eate*, whence the commonly accepted correction *disseat*; the later Folios *disease*. The objection to *disseat* seems to me to be no more than this, that it does not give a good antithesis to *cheer*: we might have looked for alternatives more antithetic than "*cheer me ever, or disseat me now*." Still the general sense is fair, viz.: 'this crisis (or attack) will bring comfort to the rest of my

days (i.e. in the event of his gaining a decisive victory and thus being rid of his fears for his safety and crown), or it will *unthron*e me now, once for all.'

Some, however, (2) would change *cheer* to *chair* and read "*chair* me...or *disseat* me"; others, (3) keeping *cheer*, follow the later Folios and read "*cheer* me or *dis-ease* me."

The merit of (2) and (3) lies solely in the verbal antithesis: neither gives good sense.

*Chair* might mean 'to *enthron*e,' and would be appropriate to a pretender to the throne; but Macbeth is already on the throne: for him it is a question of keeping on it, not of getting to it. Moreover *chair* involves a second change of text, since it cannot be treated as a phonetic variation of *cheer*; and Shakespeare never uses it as a verb.

Again, *disease* = 'to trouble, disquiet, render uneasy,' is a good antithesis to *cheer* and good Elizabethan English. Cf. *The Witch*, IV. 2, "I'll have that care I'll not *disease* him much." But how could Macbeth apply so mild a word to the fate which he knew would overtake him if defeated?

All three ways of taking the line are open to objection, but (1) seems the least of the three.

22. *my way of life*, the course of my life. To say that the course of one's life has reached the downward point ("fallen"), has declined into the autumn-stage, is surely a natural mode of expression and involves no real confusion of metaphor. Editors quote the very phrase *way of life* from *Pericles*, I. I. 54, and similar expressions, e.g. *way of youth*, from other Elizabethan works. And "accompanying" (24) harmonises with the notion of 'course, journey' which *way* suggests.

Johnson's famous emendation "*my May of life*" is attractive at first sight because of the vivid antithesis it yields between spring-time and autumn ("the sear, the yellow leaf"); and of course the figurative use of *May* is very common; cf. *Henry V.* I. 2. 120, "Is in the very *May-morn* of his youth." But surely it is a sentimental, almost effeminate phrase, that hardly fits this grim, weary man; and where there is no absolute need to depart from the 1st Folio's reading an emendation must justify itself by convincing merits.

23. *fall'n*; possibly with a hint at the noun *fall* = 'autumn.' *Sear*, dry, withered; see G. The metaphor is illustrated by *Sonnet* 73:

"That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."



33. *Give me my armour.* "The Setons of Touch were (and are still) hereditary armour-bearers to the kings of Scotland; there is thus a peculiar fitness in the choice of this name." (F.)

35. *moe*, more; see G. *skirr*, scour; see G.

37. *How does your patient, doctor?* Observe the indifference with which he asks after her—just asks and no more: it is a measure of the separation between them, and prepares us for his yet greater callousness (v. 5. 17).

*your*; used here simply for euphony, whereas Macbeth afterwards addresses the Doctor by *thou* (40, 51, 53, 56). The normal Shakespearian usage is that a master uses *thou* in speaking to anyone in his service, while the latter replies by *your*, to mark the distinction of rank. Cf. *your* in the Doctor's answer (57).

40. *minister to a mind diseased.* Striking parallels have been cited, viz. Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, 1269, 1270:

"nemo polluto queat  
animo mederi";

and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, IV. 3 (a play in which Shakespeare probably had some share), where the Doctor says: "I think she has a perturbed mind which I cannot minister to." The same scene in the *Kinsmen* shows plainly the influence of the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth* (v. 1).

43. *oblivious*, causing forgetfulness; see G.

44. *stuff'd...stuff.* To substitute *grief* or *load* for *stuff*, or *fraught* for *stuff'd*, is simply to ignore the fact that such repetitions are thoroughly Elizabethan. See v. 2. 19.

*perilous*; scan *per'lous*, like the colloquial form *parlous*. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, I. 3. 47, "Submitting me unto the perilous night," and *Henry V.* Prol. I. 22, "The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder."

48. *staff*; some interpret 'general's baton'; more probably 'lance'—literally the shaft of the lance, hence the lance itself (v. 7. 18).

54. *Pull't off*, i.e. his armour, which in his disturbed state he puts on and off—*Herford*. Here, as when Banquo is taking off his armour (II. 1), the sense is made perfectly clear in the acting.

55. *senna*. So most editors read. The 1st Folio has *cyme*, a word which does not resemble the name of any known drug and may therefore be supposed to be a misprint. The 2nd and 3rd Folios have *ceny*, which carries us some way towards *senna*, the reading of the 4th Folio. The normal Elizabethan form of *senna* was *sene*=Ital. *sena*, Arabic *sana*, and *ceny* might be considered a phonetic rendering of *sene* (treated as two syllables). But there was no fixed form (*sene*, *sena*,

*senne*, etc. being found), and it is just the sort of half-naturalised word that a printer or copyist would be uncertain about, especially if dictated to him. (F.)

59. *bane*, destruction; see G.

#### Scene 4.

1, 2. i.e. I hope the time is at hand when a man can lie down to rest and be safe. He is referring, surely, to his father's terrible fate.

4—7. *hew him down a bough*; see **Extract 25** from Holinshed.

6. *discovery*, i.e. the enemy's scouts.

9, 10. *endure Our setting down*, i.e. stand a siege by us. Cf. V. 5. 2, 3.

11. *advantage*, a favourable opportunity, viz. of leaving Macbeth's side. *to be given*, i.e. to them; that is, 'open to them, within their reach.' But the sense is forced, and probably *given* is a printer's error (due to line 12 catching his eye) for some word like *ta'en* or *got* or *gain'd*. Johnson suggested *gone* = 'where there is an opportunity to be gone from Macbeth.' (F.)

12. *more and less*, great and small, high and low; all classes alike. Cf. 2 *Henry IV.* I. 1. 209, "And more and less do flock to follow him."

13, 14. Cf. V. 2. 19, 20. *things*; very contemptuous.

14, 15. *Let our just censures*. Older and more cautious than Malcolm, Macduff hints that they should not be too sure of the hopelessness of Macbeth's cause: that a soldier's part is to make every preparation and not fall into over-confidence. 'To judge aright' (he says), 'let us wait for the issue, which will show how things really are.' No doubt the reason why he speaks with some ambiguity is to avoid seeming to rebuke the young prince whom they hope to see soon on the throne. Old Siward speaks to the same effect (16—21) in much the same style.

*censures*, judgments, opinions; see G. *event*, issue, result (Lat. *eventus*). Both "just" and "true" have a proleptic force.

*Attend*; F. *attendre*, 'to wait for.'

18. *What...we have, and what we owe*; what we have won and what we have lost; our gains and our penalties (in the case of defeat). Put colloquially his meaning is—we shall soon know 'how we stand.'

The rhyme gives the effect of elderly moralising, as in II. 4. 40, 41.

19. *Thoughts speculative*; surmise may express its uncertain hopes, but the conflict is the arbitrator that decides.

## Scene 5.

5. *forced*, reinforced.

10, 11. *The time has been*; cf. II. 2. 58.

11. *fell of hair*, scalp. *Fell* generally means (as here) a skin with the hair or wool on; closely related to *pell*, 'a skin, hide,' Lat. *pellis*.

Corin explains to Touchstone why shepherds cannot imitate courtiers' manners: "we are still [=always] handling our ewes, and their fells, you know, are greasy" (*As You Like It*, III. 2. 54, 55).

12. *treatise*, story.

17. *She should have died hereafter*. This is all he has to say: a callous remark on the inopportuneness of her death: and she was once his "dearest partner of greatness," his "dearest love" (I. 5. 10, 56). He speaks thus not so much because his love for her has perished, as because his interest in life itself is almost dead. For him there can be no sense of loss when life itself "signifies nothing." He has "put on despondency, the final heart-armour of the wretched, and would fain think everything shadowy and unsubstantial, as indeed all things are to those who cannot regard them as symbols of goodness"—*Coleridge*.

18. *such a word*, such intelligence; as in 'to send *word*.'

19—21. *To-morrow, and to-morrow... Creeps* etc.; one morrow after another creeps on in this trivial daily progress, till the last word is reached and the Book of Time closed.

*recorded time*. While Time lasts a record of it is kept, and the record will only cease when Time itself ceases, merged in Eternity. It is essentially a phrase that can only be paraphrased in some free, figurative rendering, such as the above, or 'to the last letter of the volume of Time's record.'

23. *dusty death*. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" (*The Burial of the Dead*). Yet some would substitute *dusky*, as harmonising better with the previous metaphor ("lighted"). But the whole passage is a mass of varied metaphor, and if there is one feature that characterises preeminently Shakespeare's later style it is swift transitions of metaphor. The 2nd and later Folios have *study*, which probably represents the disarranged letters of *dusty*.

*brief candle!* short-lived flame of existence; recurring to the metaphor of 22. "How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!" *Job* xxi. 17; see also xviii. 6, *Psalms* xviii. 28.

24, 25. *Life's but...a poor player*; a favourite metaphor with Shakespeare; see p. 262.

26—28. *a tale*; cf. *King John*, III. 4. 107—109:

“There's nothing in this world can make me joy:  
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale  
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man.”

28. *Signifying nothing*; not simply bad, but absolutely *nothing*: such is the final conclusion to which all his and her schemes and ambitions and crimes have brought him; the last word of pessimism!

34, 35. Dr Ward says that stories similar to this of the moving wood have been found in Arabic legend and elsewhere.

40. *cling thee*, cause thee to shrivel up. The original meaning of *cling*, an intransitive verb, was ‘to stick fast’; hence ‘to stick together, shrink together’; then ‘to stick to, cleave to.’ In pre-Shakespearian English it was quite a common word in the sense ‘to shrivel up from cold, hunger’ and similar causes, like dead animal or vegetable matter exposed to the air. Hence its transitive use here = ‘to make to shrivel up.’ See *New E. D.*

42. *pull in*, rein in, restrain. Macbeth “had permitted his courage (like a fiery horse) to carry him to the brink of a precipice, but, seeing his danger, resolves to *check* that confidence to which he had *given the rein before*”—*Steevens*. *Pall* (= ‘languish, fail in’) or *pale* is a needless change. (F.)

51. *wrack*; see G. under *wreck*.

52. *harness*, armour; see G. Much of the rhyme in this last Act is due to the number of short scenes, the divisions between which could not be indicated in any other way on the Elizabethan stage than by rhymed couplets. Moreover, here the rhyme in itself has a fine effect of melodramatic defiance and desperation.

### Scene 6.

1. *leavy*; cf. the song “Sigh no more” in *Much Ado About Nothing*, II. 3. 72—75:

“Sing no more ditties, sing no moe  
Of dumps so dull and heavy;  
The fraud of men was ever so,  
Since summer first was leavy.”

Milton uses the *v*-form, not *leafy*; cf. *Comus*, 278. *V* in place of *f* in many words characterised the southern dialects.

4. *battle*, division of an army; here ‘the foreguard, vanguard.’

7. *Do we but*, if we but.

## Scene 7.

1—4. It has been well said that at the last Macbeth “fights not like ‘Bellona’s bridegroom,’ but with a wild and animal clinging to life.” In the degradation of his nature through crime, his courage has degenerated into a “dull ferocity.”

2. *the course*, the technical term in bear-baiting for the onset of the dogs. Shakespeare refers to this cruel pastime several times. Cf. *King Lear*, III. 7. 54, “I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course.” So in *Twelfth Night*, II. 5. 9, and III. 1. 129—131:

“Have you not set mine honour at the stake  
And baited it with all the unmuzzled thoughts  
That tyrannous heart can think?”

2. *What’s he*, what sort of a man is he?

3, 4. Deceived in one of the prophecies which he thought so “good” (IV. 1. 96), he falls back on the other, with the true desperation and superstition of the gambler.

10. *abhorred*, detestable.

12, 13. The rhyme is merely an echo of the jingling speech of the Apparition (IV. 1. 79, 80).

17. *kerns*; here a contemptuous word = ‘boors.’

18. *staves*, lances. *either thou*; the sentence is not completed; a sign of the speaker’s excitement.

22. *bruted*, announced; see G.

24. *gently render’d*, surrendered without resistance.

29. *beside us*, i.e. so as to miss us; not really trying to slay us.

## Scene 8.

1. *play the Roman fool*, by committing suicide to avoid capture. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, V. 3. 89, where Titinius, as he kills himself, says, “this is a Roman’s part.” In that play Brutus and Cassius, typical Romans, both commit suicide when they see that their cause is hopeless and only the disgrace of capture awaits them. And in V. 1. 101—103 Brutus refers to the famous instance of Marcus Cato (B.C. 96—46), who after Pompey’s overthrow at the battle of Pharsalia went to Africa and killed himself at Utica (whence his common title *Cato Uticensis*), to avoid falling into Cæsar’s hands. So Antony falls on his own sword (*Antony and Cleopatra*, IV. 14. 102). Shakespeare’s own recognition

of the sin of "self-slaughter" is expressed, one may think, by Hamlet (I. 2. 131, 132).

2. *lives*, living men; on whom it is "better" to exercise his sword than on himself (3).

7, 8. *thou bloodier villain* etc., i.e. villain bloodier than any words can describe you.

9. *intrenchant*, invulnerable, not to be cut; literally 'not cutting' (cf. III. 4. 27); the word is another illustration of the free use of the adjectival and participial terminations in Elizabethan English. Editors quote *Hamlet*, I. 1. 146, "For it is, as the air, invulnerable" (referring to the Ghost), and IV. 1. 44, "the woundless air."

12. *charmed*. The word would have more significance in times nearer to "the days of chivalry, [when] the champions' arms being ceremoniously blessed, each took an oath that he used no *charmed* weapons. Macbeth, according to the law of arms, or perhaps only in allusion to this custom, tells Macduff of the security he had in the prediction of the spirit"—*Upton*. (F.)

*must not*, is not destined to.

14. *angel*, evil angel; referring to the idea of a man's 'genius,' a 'demon.' So perhaps when Antony calls Brutus "Cæsar's angel". (*Julius Cæsar*, III. 2. 185). See III. 1. 56, note.

15, 16. At last the real force of *born* in the fatal couplet becomes clear to Macbeth—and to us: 'born naturally, brought forth in due course.'

There is, says Mr Moulton, an artistic completeness in the operations of Nemesis in *Macbeth*; "a perfect equality between the sin and its retribution." Thus Macbeth "surrendered himself to the supernatural, and from the supernatural his retribution comes"—first in the agony of the banquet-scene and then in the deception of these riddling answers which have duped him to his doom.

16. *Untimely ripp'd*. "The untimely birth of Macduff is shown to be a feature which in Germanic mythology invariably indicates heroic strength"—*Ward*.

18. *my better part of man*. Furness quotes the interpretation "the better part of my manhood." But *better part* is a phrase that seems to have had very often a peculiar force in Elizabethan writers, viz. 'the soul' or 'the mind'—the sense in which some explain the much discussed "Atalanta's better part" of *As You Like It*, III. 2. 155. So here I think Macbeth means 'my very soul.'

20—22. Cf. V. 5. 43, 44. Banquo, the honest-minded, knew the truth from the very first (I. 3. 123—126).

*palter*, equivocate, quibble; cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. 11. 62, 63, where Antony laments that he has fallen so low that he cannot face Octavius boldly but must

“To the young man send humble treaties, dodge  
And palter in the shifts of lowness.”

24—27. Shakespeare is referring to the shows and fairs of his own “time.” Cf. *The Tempest*, II. 2. 28—34, where Trinculo, finding the queer-shaped Caliban, says:

“A strange fish! Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver: there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man: when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian.”

Such exhibitions were common, especially at fairs. Malone quotes a licence given by the Master of the Revels (who to some extent controlled public entertainments) “to shew a strange fish for half a year, the 3rd of September, 1632.”

*Painted*, i.e. as an advertisement outside a booth, so as to tempt people to pay for going inside (where the “monster” itself would be exhibited).

*upon a pole*, i.e. on a cloth suspended from a pole—Malone.

31. *And thou opposed*, i.e. and *though* thou be opposed.

34. *Exeunt, fighting. Alarums*. So the Folio; but it adds *Enter Fighting, and Macbeth slain*. The latter seems inconsistent with the stage-direction at line 53, which implies that Macbeth was slain off the stage.

Still it is possible that Macbeth and Macduff should go off “fighting” after line 34 but return immediately; that Macbeth should be killed before the audience and his body be drawn off the stage by Macduff during the re-entry and conversation of the other characters (35—53); and that Macduff, having decapitated his enemy behind the scenes, should then return (line 53).

The practical objection, however, to this arrangement is that it leaves the stage absolutely empty after line 34: this would be quite contrary to Shakespeare’s practice if the interval is of any appreciable duration: and if the absence of Macbeth and Macduff is only momentary, then there is no point in it. And the æsthetic objection is that the objective horror of a death-scene enacted *coram populo* diminishes its impression on the imagination. Moreover, the incident of decapitation becomes over-brutal; a piece of methodical butchery that merely

disgusts. Most editors therefore reject the second stage-direction *Enter Fighting, and Macbeth slain* as a mistake, due perhaps to the actors having tampered with Shakespeare's own arrangement and adopted the arrangement outlined above, to please the grosser tastes of the audience.

36. *go off*, be killed; another euphemism for death. It is the play's last flash of "irony" that the words should be put in the father's mouth, after we have witnessed the son's fate.

*by these*; pointing to the many round him, who have not fallen.

41. *proress*; slurred into one syllable; see G.

46—53. The story of young Siward's death and of his father's bearing is told in Holinshed: "when his father heard the newes, he demanded whether he receiued the wound whereof he died, in the forepart of the bodie, or in the hinder part: and when it was told him that he receiued it in the forepart; I reioise (saith he) euen with all my heart, for I would not wish either to my sonne nor to my selfe any other kind of death." (F.)

It might be an extract from some classical story of Spartan or Roman fortitude. "Had he his hurts before?" is essentially the classical spirit.

52. *parted*; cf. the Hostess's description of Falstaff's death: "a' parted...even at the turning o' the tide" (*Henry V.* II. 3. 12, 13).

*paid his score*; a common colloquial phrase = 'paid his debt.'

*score*; properly a notch cut on a tally or piece of wood, then 'an account kept by notches,' and so 'any account, reckoning.' Icelandic *skor*, 'a score, cut'; cf. the cognate A.S. *scéran*, 'to cut, to shear.'

54, 55. *behold, where stands*, i.e. *on a pole*, which words some editors add to the stage-direction. See **Extract 26** (2nd par., last line).

*the time is free*, the age has regained its freedom: we are no longer slaves.

56. *pearl*, choicest representatives; the flower of your subjects, i.e. the great nobles who are assembled round their king.

63. *Henceforth be earls, the first*, etc.; see **Extract 27** (last lines).

64. *to do*; the gerund; cf. phrases like 'a house *to let*,' 'water *to drink*.' This was the old idiom; cf. Chaucer, *Second Nun's Tale*, 437, "'Your might,' quod she, 'ful litle is *to drede*,'" i.e. your might, she said, is little to be feared.

66. *As*, namely, to wit. *exiled friends*; in particular, his brother Donalbain, from Ireland (II. 3. 121).

68. *Producing*, bringing to justice.

70. *self*; in its adjectival use = 'own, pertaining to self.' Cf.



*Richard II.* III. 2. 166, "Infusing him with self and vain conceit," i.e. vain self-conceit. This use underlies the expression "My strange and self-abuse" (III. 4. 142), where *self* has a divided grammatical duty, being a quasi-adjective in relation to "strange," yet a part of the compound *self-abuse*. Strictly the form of expression then should be either "my strange and self abuse," or "my strange self-abuse."

71. *Took off her life*; cf. I. 7. 20, III. 1. 105.

72. *the grace of Grace*. Editors quote *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III. 1. 146, *All's Well That Ends Well*, II. 1. 163.

75. *at Scone*. Cf. II. 4. 31, 32; see **Extract 27**. Malcolm III. was not crowned till 1057, after the overthrow of Macbeth's son (or nephew, according to some) Lulach, who had been set up by Macbeth's followers, in opposition to Malcolm. The historical date of Macbeth's defeat by Siward (either the maternal uncle or cousin of Malcolm) is July 27, 1054. Siward's victory "enabled him to establish Malcolm as king of Cumbria...Macbeth still maintained his power north of the Mounth, but three years later, after the death of Siward, Malcolm himself succeeded in defeating and slaying Macbeth at Lumphanan in Mar on 15 Aug. 1057"—*Dict. of Biog.* Shakespeare, therefore, has again combined two campaigns.

Malcolm, commonly called Malcolm Canmore, was "the first King of Scotland who is more than a name"—(*Dict. of Biog.*). "Regarded as a whole, the reign of Malcolm is one of the most important in Scottish history...His position was stronger than that of any king who preceded him"—*Hume Brown*. He died 1093.

The clouds have lifted at last, and the tragedy closes with the hope that under the rule of its young King the dawn of a happier era for Scotland is close at hand.

The end of *Macbeth* is very similar to that of *Hamlet*, where the sceptre for which Hamlet himself was ill-fitted passes into the strong grasp of "young Fortinbras," at Hamlet's own bequest: "he has my dying voice" (v. 2. 367). Even *King Lear* ends on the notes of duty and optimism: that the world's work must go forward, and that there are men to do it. *Othello* alone leaves us discomfited and wondering. But from the depths of *Othello* we know that Shakespeare's spirit rose again to the serene content and truer vision of *The Tempest*.

“Shakspeare is always master of himself and his subject,—a genuine Proteus: we see all things in him, as images in a clear lake, most distinct, most accurate,—only more splendid, more glorified... But he requires your sympathy and your submission; you must have that recipency of moral impression without which the purposes and ends of the drama would be frustrated, and the absence of which demonstrates an utter want of all imagination, a deadness to that necessary pleasure of being innocently—shall I say, deluded?—or rather drawn away from ourselves to the music of noblest thought in harmonious sound”—  
*Coleridge.*

## GLOSSARY.

*Abbreviations:—*

A.S. = Anglo-Saxon, i.e. English down to about the Conquest.

Middle E. = Middle English, i.e. English from about the Conquest to about 1500.

Elizabethan E. = the English of Shakespeare and his contemporaries (down to about 1650).

O.F. = Old French, i.e. till about 1600. F. = modern French.

Germ. = modern German. Gk. = Greek.

Ital. = Italian. Lat. = Latin.

*New E. D.* = the *New English Dictionary*.

*Cent. Dict.* = the *Century Dictionary*.

**NOTE:** In using the Glossary the student should pay very careful attention to the context in which each word occurs.

**abuse**, III. 1. 50, 'to deceive,' like F. *abuser*. See *Cymbeline*, III. 4. 123, "my master is abused," and I. 4. 124, "you are abused" = 'mistaken, deceived.' Lat. *abuti*.

**access**, I. 5. 42. Many words retained in Elizabethan E. the French accent, derived from the original Latin words. Thus Milton wrote "By policy and long *procéss* of time" (*Paradise Lost*, II. 297); cf. F. *procès*, Lat. *procéssus*. So Shakespeare scans *accéss*, *edict*, *exile*, when it suits him.

**admired**, III. 4. 110, 'strange, astonishing.' Elizabethan writers constantly use *admire*, and its derivatives, in the sense of Lat. *admirari*, 'to wonder, be astonished at.' Cf. *Revelation* xvii. 6, "And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration"; and *Paradise Lost*, II. 677, 678:

"The undaunted fiend what this might be admired,  
Admired, not fear'd."

**afear'd**, I. 3. 96, I. 7. 39, V. 1. 36; used by Shakespeare = *afraid*, but distinct; *afear'd* being the past participle of *afear*, 'to frighten,' A.S. *aféran*; and *afraid* the participle of *affray*, from Low Lat. *exfrediare*, 'to break the peace, disturb.'

**affeer**, IV. 3. 34; strictly a legal term = 'to fix or settle the amount of an amercement, i.e. a fine, to assess': hence 'to settle, confirm.' Certain cases were tried before assessors or jurors entitled *affeerors*. Cf. Manwood's *Lawes of Forest* (1615): "They shal be amerced and their amercements shal be affeared by affeers there"; and *Termes de la Ley* (1641): "Affeers are such as be appointed in Court leets &c. to mulct such as have committed any fault which is arbitrarily punishable, and for which no expresse penalty is prescribed by Statute." Derived through O.F. *aforer*, later form *afeurer*, from Late Lat. *afforare*, 'to fix the price or market-value' (Lat. *ad*, 'to' + *forum*, 'market,' in Late Lat. 'market-price'). See *New E. D.*

**alarm**, V. 2. 4, 'a summons to take up arms,' from Ital. *all' arme*, 'to arms!'—Lat. *ad illa arma*. Now the other form *alarum*, common in stage-directions, keeps the idea 'a loud summons, call,' while *alarm* indicates the fear which such a summons indicates.

**an**, III. 6. 19. Note that—(1) *an* is a weakened form of *and* (*d* often drops off from the end of a word: cf. *lawn* = *laund*); (2) *and* = 'if' was a regular use till about 1600. Cf. Bacon, *Essays* (23), "they will set an house on fire, *and* it were but to roast their egges." The 1st Folio (1623) often has *and* where modern texts print *an*. The phrase *and if* (cf. *Matthew* xxiv. 48) or *an if* really = 'if if,' since *and* or *an* by itself expresses the condition: *if* was added to strengthen it. The cognate Scandinavian word *enda* was also used = 'if.'

**annoyance**, V. 1. 75, 'hurt, harm.' Shakespeare always uses *annoy* in the strong sense 'to hurt, harm.' Cf. *Julius Caesar*, I. 3. 20—22:

"Against the Capitol I met a lion,  
Who glared upon me, and went surly by,  
Without annoying me."

So Milton speaks of Samson's strength being given him that he might "annoy" the Philistines (*Samson Agonistes*, 578). Through O.F. *anoi*, 'vexation' (F. *ennui*), from Lat. *in odio*, as in the phrase *est mihi in odio*, 'it is *odious* to me.'

**antic**, IV. 1. 130, 'quaint, fantastic'; especially said in Elizabethan E. of carving and stonework. What is old (*antique*) often appears odd (*antic*) to later generations; Lat. *antiquus*. Cf. *The Two Noble*

*Kinsmen*, IV. 1. 75, "And all we'll dance an antic for the duke" (i.e. a quaint dance); and Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, 30, 31:

"With antic Sports, and blue-eyed Pleasures,  
Frisking light in frolic measures."

**aroint**, I. 3. 6, 'avaunt.' The phrase "aroint thee, witch" was evidently proverbial; cf. *King Lear*, III. 4. 125—129:

"Saint Withold footed thrice the old;  
He met the night-mare, and her nine-fold;  
Bid her alight,  
And her troth plight,  
And, aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!"

Editors refer to Ray's *North Country Words* (1691), which has: "Ryntye, by your leave, stand handsomely. As 'Rynt you, witch, quoth Bessie Locket to her mother'; Proverb, *Cheshire*." Seemingly this *rynt* is a short ('aphetised') form of *aroint*. The sense of *aroint* is clearly 'avaunt, begone!' and probably it is the same as, or closely connected with, an old word *arunt* (etymology unknown); cf.

"And here sculd men arunt...confessours and oþer prestis þat assoylen for money" (i.e. priests that absolve);  
"And here shul men arunte þe feend þat stirip men to last in þis erreure."

These extracts are from a tract by Wyclif. Dr Murray adds *Dives and Pauper*, 1496, "Make the [thee] plesaunt in speche to the congregacyon of poore folke...not arunt them ne rebuke them ne chyde them." In the first passage the sense of *arunt* is 'avoid,' in the others perhaps 'drive away'; each is kindred to the notion 'begone' in *aroint*. All the old derivations of *aroint* such as 'dii *averruncent*,' are now rejected.

As regards the statement that *rynt thee* or 'roint thee' is a term still used in Cheshire by milkmaids to bid a cow that has been milked to get out of the way, the real phrase used appears to be *rynd-ta* = 'round thee,' i.e. move round, move away, *rynd* being a local pronunciation of *round*. (Furness and *New E. D.*)

**assay**, IV. 3. 138. Except in *King Lear*, I. 2. 47, and *Sonnet* 110, Shakespeare, like Milton, uses *assay*, not *essay*. Now *assay*, except as a poetical form, is used only of the testing of metals. O.F. *essai* or *assai* = Lat. *exagium*, Gk. *ἐξάγιον*, 'a weighing, trial of weight.'

**balm**, II. 2. 39; properly the aromatic oily resin of the *balsam-tree*:

hence any fragrant oil or ointment for anointing, or soothing pain; especially the consecrated oil used at the coronation of a monarch.

**bane**, v. 3. 59, 'destruction.' Cf. *Measure for Measure*, I. 2. 133, "Like rats that *ravin* down their proper *bane*," i.e. devour greedily the poison put for them. So **baned** = 'destroyed,' *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1. 46. Ultimately from the same root as Gk. *φόνος*, 'murder.'

**bill**, III. 1. 100, 'a written paper,' hence 'a list'; cf. the diminutive *billet*. A *bill* was so called from its seal (Lat. *bullā*); cf. *bull* = 'papal edict,' likewise named from the *bullā* or seal.

**boltered**, IV. 2. 123, 'having the hair matted with clots' (of blood). The verb *bolter*, older form *balter*, is of Scandinavian origin; cf. Danish *baltre* or *boltre*, 'to wallow, welter.' It meant (1) 'to tumble about,' hence (2) 'to tangle or mat the hair' by tumbling it about, 'to clot or clog with anything sticky,' as by tumbling about in mud. With this general idea 'clotted, matted,' *balter* or *bolter* and its derivatives survive in the dialects of various counties, especially Warwickshire. Thus in Warwickshire snow is said to *bolter* on a horse's hoof, likewise dirt that collects in the hairs of an animal's legs and forms into hard masses. Dialect-words still in use in various counties are *balter*, 'a clot,' *baltery*, 'lumpy,' and *baltered* or *boltered*, 'clogged, matted'; each being used e.g. of ill-mixed, lumpy flour. The original sense of *balter*, viz. 'to tumble about,' as found e.g. in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1440), where the word is used of a bear's clumsy movements, is still current in the Yorkshire dialects. (*New E. D.* and *Dialect Dict.*) For the alternative forms in *a* and *o* compare *plat* (as in *Il Penseroso*, 73, "Oft, on a plat of rising ground") and *plot*; see also *choppy* = *chappy*.

**boot**. From *boot*, 'advantage, good' (A.S. *bót*); the root being that which we get in *better*, *best*. Cf. 1 *Henry VI.* IV. 6. 52, "Then talk no more of flight, it is no boot," i.e. 'it is no *good*.' Common as an impersonal verb; cf. *Lycidas*, 64, 65:

"Alas! What boots it with uncessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade?"

Hence *to boot* (IV. 3. 37) means 'to the good,' i.e. in addition.

**brinded**, IV. 1. 1; an older form than *brindled*; it means literally 'marked as with a *brand*,' and generally indicates stripes of dark colour on the tawny coat of an animal. Cf. "the brinded lioness," *Comus*, 443; "brinded mane," *Paradise Lost*, VII. 465.

**bruit**, v. 7. 22, 'to announce with noise'; more often 'to report, noise abroad,' as in 1 *Henry VI.* II. 3. 68, "I find thou art no less than

fame hath bruited." The noun *bruit*, 'a report, rumor,' is from F. *bruit*, 'noise,' Late Lat. *brugitus*, 'a clamour' (connected probably with Lat. *rugitus*, 'a roaring,' *rugire*, 'to roar,' the *b* being prefixed).

**carouse**, II. 3. 23; originally an adverb used in the phrase 'to drink *carouse*' = 'all out'; formed, like F. *carousser*, from German *gar-aus*, 'quite out,' i.e. with no liquor left in the glass. It was a stock piece of Elizabethan satire that the Germans were great toppers; cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, I. 2. 90—108.

**censure**. The original sense, common in Elizabethan E., of the verb was 'to judge' = Lat. *censere*. So *censure* = 'judgment, opinion' (v. 4. 14); cf. *Hamlet*, I. 3. 69, "Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment." As we are apt to judge others unfavourably, *censure* comes to mean 'blame.' Words tend to deteriorate in sense.

**charm**, I. 3. 37; from Lat. *carmen*, 'a song or incantation'; like *enchant* from Lat. *incantare*, it still kept the notion of 'spell, magical power'; cf. *Samson Agonistes*, 934, "Thy fair enchanted cup and warbling charms." The force of the two words weakened as the belief in magic declined.

**chaudron**, or **chawdron**, IV. 1. 33, 'the entrails of an animal,' especially the parts used for food; cf. the cognate Germ. *kaldauen*, 'entrails.'

Middle E. *chaudoun* is from O.F. *chaudun*, 'entrails,' from Lat. *caldunum*, the first part of which is from Lat. *calidus*, 'hot,' while the latter part (*-unum*) is doubtful. *Chaudoun* got confused with *chaldron*, the old form of *cauldron* (the food being cooked in a *cauldron*), and old writers often use *chaldron* = 'entrails'; the *r* in *chaudron* or *chawdron* is a relic of this confusion. The Middle E. *chaudoun* also meant "a kind of sauce, consisting of chopped entrails, spices and other ingredients"—a sense common in cookery-books of the 15th century. (*New E. D.*)

The references in the *Dialect Dict.* show that *chaudron*, 'entrails,' is current in the dialects of various counties, but oddly corrupted, e.g. into *churn* (Isle of Wight). In Gloucestershire the word is used of 'forced meat or stuffing.'

**cherubin**, I. 7. 22; a plural. The word 'cherub' comes directly from the Heb. *kherūbh*, and makes its true plural 'cherubim' = *kherūbim* (so always in Milton). The form 'cherubin' comes through the French (which follows the Latinised form *cherubinus*) and makes its plural 'cherubins'; cf. Wyclif, *Exodus* xxv. 18, "two golden cherubyns." So always elsewhere in Shakespeare, e.g. in *The Merchant of Venice*, v. 62, "Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins." But sometimes, e.g. in

the *Te Deum*, 'cherubin' was used as plural; so here, apparently. In the Bible of 1611 we have a hybrid form 'cherubims,' changed in the Revised Version to the correct Heb. 'cherubim.' *Kherūbh* is from the Babylonian word for the figure of the winged bull which stood at the door of a house to keep off evil spirits. The Jews probably owed it to the Phœnicians.

**choppy**, I. 3. 44, i.e. *chappy*; cf. *Julius Cæsar*, I. 2. 246, "the rabblement hooted, and clapped their chopped hands." Middle E. *choppen* or *chappen* = 'to cut'; hence, 'to gape open,' like a wound made by a cut, or like a crack in the skin.

**chough**, III. 4. 125, applied formerly to any sort of crow, but especially the jackdaw; cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III. 2. 21, "russet-pated choughs," i.e. 'grey-headed,' an epithet precisely suitable to the jackdaw, which has greyish plumage about the head and neck. So in *The Tempest*, II. 1. 266, and *All's Well That Ends Well*, IV. 1. 22 ("choughs' language, gabble enough"), the word is used with the notion of chattering like a daw that has been taught to speak. Now *chough* is used strictly of the red-legged crow which frequents sea-cliffs, e.g. in Cornwall; though in Devonshire it still remains the popular name for the jackdaw. Cognate with O.F. *choue*, Danish *kaa*, Dutch *kauw*, all formed in imitation of the bird's note.

**clept**, III. 1. 94, 'called.' A.S. *cleopian*, 'to call,' a variant form of *clipian*. Cf. *Hamlet*, I. 4. 19, "They clepe us drunkards." The word, which is very common in Chaucer and early writers, is most familiar now through Milton's lines (*L'Allegro*, 11—13):

"But come, thou Goddess fair and free,  
In Heaven ycleped Euphrosyne,  
And by men heart-easing Mirth."

The participle *ycleped* or *yclept* (where *y* = the old participial prefix *ge*) "was greatly affected in the 16th century, and is still a frequent literary archaism"—*New E. D.*

**combustion**, II. 3. 40; properly 'conflagration,' from Lat. *comburare*, 'to burn up'; hence metaphorically 'utter social confusion.' It is one of the high-sounding, Latinised words dear to Milton: Satan was flung from Heaven "With hideous ruin and combustion down" (*Paradise Lost*, I. 46), and the rebellious angels were able (VI. 224—226)

"to raise  
Dreadful combustion warring, and disturb,  
Though not destroy, their happy native seat!"



So in his prose-works, e.g. in *Of Reformation*, where he taunts his foes with seeking "to use every poor shift, and if that serve not, to threaten uproar and combustion, and shake the brand of civil discord" (Bohn's ed. II. 417; see also p. 467, and III. 162).

**dear**, v. 2. 3, 'grievous, heart-felt.' The general Elizabethan sense of *dear* (cognate with Germ. *theuer*) is 'that which affects us closely, whether in a good or bad way.' In Shakespeare it often has a bad sense. Cf. *Hamlet*, I. 2. 182, "my dearest foe," i.e. worst enemy; and *Richard II.* I. 3. 151, "The dateless limit of thy dear exile." So in *Lycidas*, 6, "Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear." The sense may have been partly due to confusion with A.S. *dȳor*, 'grievous.'

**dismal**, I. 2. 53; O.F. *dis mal*, 'unlucky days,' Lat. *dies mali*, 'evil days.' "The phrase was misunderstood, and *dismal* was treated as an adjective, with the addition of *days*; and later, of other substantives"—*Skeat*.

**dollar**, I. 2. 63, derived through Dutch *daler* from Germ. *thaler*, which is short for *Joachimsthaler*, the name of a coin originally made from silver found in *Joachimsthal* (Joachim's *dale*) in Bohemia, early in the 16th century. Now, of course, *dollar* is mainly associated with the American coin (about 4s.) of that name. There were no dollars in Macbeth's time.

**doom**, II. 3. 60, 'judgment.' Cf. *doomsday* = A.S. *dōmes dæg*; A.S. *dēman*, 'to judge.' We get the same root (= 'to lay down,' hence 'decide') in Gk. *θέμις*, 'law,' from *τίθημι*, 'I lay down, set.'

**earnest**, I. 3. 104, 'a pledge,' literally 'money paid beforehand as a pledge.' Cf. Cowley's lines:

"Of heavenly rest, this earnest to me lend,  
Let my life sleep, and learn to love her end,"

i.e. may "a quiet life here be the pledge of heavenly rest hereafter"—*Lumby* (Cowley's *Essays*, Pitt Press ed. p. 231). Lat. *arrha*, from Gk. *ἀρραβών*, 'earnest-money, pledge.'

**ecstasy**, III. 2. 22. Gk. *ék*, 'out' + *στάσις*, 'a standing'; so that the literal notion is 'being beside (i.e. outside) oneself.' It is used similarly of extreme mental torture in *The Tempest*, III. 3. 108.

**favour**; often = 'face, features' (I. 5. 70). So *well-favoured* = 'of good looks, handsome,' as in *Genesis* xxix. 17, "Rachel was beautiful and well favoured"; and *ill-favoured* = 'ugly.' *Favour* meant (1) 'kindness,' (2) 'expression of kindness in the face,' (3) 'the face itself.'

**fee**, IV. 3. 191; much used as a legal term in connection with the

possession or tenure of land. Thus *fee-simple* = hereditary land, held without any conditions and 'for ever.' A.S. *feoh* (cf. Germ. *vieh*) meant (1) 'cattle,' (2) 'property'—cattle being the chief kind of property in a primitive state of society. Cf. Lat. *pecunia* from *pecus*. A *fellow*, e.g. of a college, is literally 'one who *lays* his *fee* (i.e. share of the property) along with that of others; hence a partner'—Icelandic *félagi*, 'a partner.' (Mayhew.)

**fell**, IV. 2. 70, A.S. *fel*, 'fierce, cruel'; akin to *felon*, properly 'a fierce, savage man,' then 'one who robs with violence,' and so any robber.

**flaw**, III. 4. 63, 'a burst of passion,' literally 'a sudden and violent gust of wind.' A poetic word: Cf. *Hamlet*, V. 1. 239, "the winter's flaw"; and Tennyson, *Marriage of Geraint*, "Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn." Milton has a fine description of northern winds (*Paradise Lost*, X. 697, 698)

"Bursting their brazen dungeon, armed with ice  
And snow and hail and stormy gust and flaw."

The same as *flaw*, 'a crack' = Swedish *flaga*, 'a crack,' also 'blast of wind.' Perhaps 'sudden burst' is the radical notion.

**foison**, IV. 3. 83, 'plenty, abundance.' Antony, speaking of the Egyptians, says (*Antony and Cleopatra*, II. 7. 20—24) that they estimate "the flow o' the Nile" and can tell

"By the height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth  
Or foison follow."

F. *foison*, 'abundance, plenty'; Lat. *fusio*, 'a pouring out'; cf. 'profusion.'

**gallowglass**, I. 2. 13; Irish *galloglach*, 'a foreign soldier'; the *gallowglasses* being originally soldiers in the service of the Irish and other Gaelic chiefs; heavy-armed after the manner of the English military settlers in Ireland. Irish *gall*, 'foreigner, stranger' + *óglách*, 'a youth, servant, warrior.' Spenser in his *View of the Present State of Ireland* (1598) describes the equipment of the *gallowglass*, and speaks of the light-armed *kern* as "the proper [i.e. native] Irish souldiour"; see 'Globe ed.' p. 640. The word *gallowglass* was specially used of these English settlers by the Irish themselves.

**graymalkin**, I. 1. 8; a name for a grey cat, commonly corrupted into *grimalkin*. The name *Malkin* (= *Maldkin*) is a diminutive of *Maud*, not *Mary*; it means 'little *Mald*' (whence the softened form *Maud*).

**groom**, II. 2. 50, 'a servant'; formerly not limited to a particular class of servants; compare some of the titles of court-officials, e.g. 'Groom of the Chamber.' Its original sense was simply 'a man-child, boy; a male.' Dutch *grom*, 'offspring.' It is through confusion with *groom* that we get the *r* in *bridegroom*, which should be *bridegoom* = A.S. *brȳd-guma*, 'bride-man'; cf. Germ. *bräutigam*.

**harbinger**, I. 4. 45; used here in reference to its original sense, viz. 'an officer who went in advance of an army or prince to make provision for the night's shelter' (*harbourage*). Cf. Florio's *Dictionary*, 1598, "Foriere, a harbinger for a camp or a prince"; and the old dictionary called *Bullokar's Expositor*, 1616, "Harbinger, one that taketh vp lodging for others." Hence the general sense 'forerunner' (v. 6. 10). From Icelandic *herbergi*, 'an army shelter'; cf. the cognate German words *heer*, 'army' + *bergen*, 'to shelter.' The Middle E. form is *herbergeour*, and the *n* is intrusive, as in *passenger*, *messenger*. Cf. Chaucer, *The Man of Law's Tale*, 995—997:

"The fame anon thurghout the toun is born,  
How Alla kyng shal comen on pilgrymage,  
By herbergeours that wenten hym biforn."

**harness**, v. 5. 52, 'armour'; a common Elizabethan usage, revived by Tennyson: "Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves," *Morte d'Arthur*; "Far liefer had I gird his harness on him," *Geraint and Enid*. So *harnessed* = 'dressed in armour.' Cf. *Troilus*, I. 2. 8, "Before the sun rose he was harness'd light"; and Milton's *Nativity Ode*, 243, 244:

"And all about the courtly stable  
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable."

O.F. *harneis*, 'armour'; cf. Breton *harnes*, 'iron, iron-implements.'

**his**; this was the ordinary *neuter* (as well as masculine) possessive pronoun in Middle E. and remained so in Elizabethan E. Cf. *Genesis* iii. 15, "*it* shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise *his* heel." There was also a use, not common, of *it* as a possessive, though uninflected; especially in the phrase *it own*. Cf. *The Tempest*, II. 1. 163, "of *it* own kind," and the Bible of 1611 in *Leviticus* xxv. 5, "of *it* owne accord."

Then from the possessive use of *it* uninflected there arose, about the close of the 16th century, the inflected form *its*, in which *-s* is the usual possessive inflection, as in *his*. This new form *its* came into use slowly, the old idiom *his* being generally retained by Elizabethans. There are

no instances of *its* in Spenser or the Bible (1611), and only three in Milton's poetical works (*Paradise Lost*, I. 254, IV. 813, *Nativity Ode*, 106). *Its* does not occur in any extant work of Shakespeare printed prior to his death: hence it seems not improbable that the nine instances in the 1st Folio (five in a single play, *The Winter's Tale*) were due to the editors or printers.

**holp**, I. 6. 23; the form of the preterite of *help* (originally a 'strong' verb) used as a past participle, instead of *holpen*. "He hath holpen his servant Israel," *Luke* i. 54. Elizabethan writers often interchange the forms of preterites and past participles.

**howlet**, IV. 1. 17, 'an owl'; cf. Middleton's *The Witch*, IV. 2:

"*Hecate*. Leave all to me and my five sisters, daughter:  
It shall be convey'd in at howlet-time;  
Take you no care: my spirits know their moments;  
Raven or screech-owl never fly by th' door  
But they call in—I thank 'em—and they lose not by't."

*Howlet* is from F. *hulotte*, 'an owl,' which Littré connects with our word *owl*, Germ. *eule*, Lat. *ulula*. All these are cognate with (the aspirated) words *howl*, F. *hurler*, Germ. *heulen*; from the onomatopœic root seen in Gk. *ὐλάειν*. An *owl*, therefore, is so called because it *howls*, and in old writers, e.g. Lydgate, we actually find an aspirated form *howle=owl*. (*New E. D.*)

**hurlyburly**, I. 1. 3, 'uproar, tumult.' Cf. Skeat: "A reduplicated word, the second syllable being an echo of the first. The simple form *hurly* is the original; see *King John*, III. 4. 169, 'Methinks I see this hurly all on foot.' F. *hurler*, to howl, yell; a corruption of *huller*"—Lat. *ululare*.

Sir Thomas More, describing how poverty leads to discontent and uprisings in states, says: "who be bolder stomaked to bring all in a hurlie-burlye (therby trustinge to get some windfal) than they that have nothinge to leese (i.e. lose)?" See Pitt Press ed. of More's *Utopia*, pp. 52, 55.

**husbandry**, II. 1. 4, 'economy, thrift.' Cf. Bacon's *History of Henry VII.*, "France is no wilderness; and I [Henry VII.], that profess good husbandry, hope to make the war, after the beginnings, to pay itself." (Pitt Press ed. p. 91.) *Husband*=Icelandic *hūsbondi*, 'master of a house,' literally 'one dwelling in a house' (*hūs*).

**incarnadine**, II. 2. 62. Shakespeare seems to have been the first to use *incarnadine* as a verb='to dye red'; from F. *incarnadin*, Ital.

*incarnadino*, 'carnation-coloured,' literally 'flesh-colour'; Lat. *incarnatus*, 'clothed with flesh.' The 1st Folio has 'incarnardine,' and some retain the spelling.

The *Cent. Dict.* quotes Longfellow's Sonnet *The Evening Star*:

"Lo! in the painted oriel of the West,  
Whose fanes the sunken sun incarnadines."

**kern**, I. 2. 13; a corruption of Irish *ceatharnach*, 'a soldier.' These *kerns* were light-armed, and in Elizabethan writers are often mentioned together with the *gallogglasses* (I. 2. 13), the heavy-armed Irish foot-soldiers. Cf. 2 *Henry VI.* IV. 9. 24—27:

"The Duke of York is newly come from *Ireland*,  
And with a puissant and a mighty power  
Of *gallogglasses* and stout *kerns*  
Is marching hitherward in proud array."

Cf. also *Richard II.* II. I. 155, 156:

"Now for our Irish wars:  
We must supplant those rough rug-headed kerns."

Middle E. *kerne*, 'a kern,' was sometimes used collectively for this class of soldiers.

**latch**, IV. 3. 190, 'to catch'; A.S. *læccan*, cognate with *clutch*, which is ultimately from A.S. *ge-læccan*. Cf. *Sonnet* 113. *Latch* is probably a quite different word in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III. 2. 36:

"But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes  
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?"

Apparently, *latch* there means to 'moisten,' and is cognate with A.S. *leccan*, 'to wet'; cf. '*latch-pan*' (= 'a *dripping-pan*'), so called because it is used to drip liquid fat on meat, not because it 'catches' the drops.

**liege**, I. 4. 2, 'lord, sovereign'; properly 'free,' O.F. *lige*, from the Teutonic root seen in Germ. *ledig*, 'free.' "A *liege* lord was a lord of a free band, and his *lieges* were privileged free men, faithful to him, but free from other service" (Skeat). Gradually *liege* lost the notion 'free,' and came to mean 'subject'; partly through confusion with Lat. *ligatus*, 'bound.'

**limbec**, I. 7. 67; short for *alembic*, 'a vessel for distilling.' It is one of those hybrid words of Arabic+Greek origin which came into Spain through the Moors and then passed into European languages. Arabic *al*, 'the'+*anbik*, 'a still,' from Gk. ἄμβιξ, 'a cup.' For the Arabic definite article *al*, 'the,' cf. '*alchemy*,' '*algebra*,' '*alcohol*.'

**luxury**; Shakespeare always uses *luxury* = 'lust,' the sense of *luxuria* in Late Lat.; and **luxurious** (IV. 3. 58) = 'lustful,' *luxuriosus*.

**magot-pie**, III. 4. 125, 'magpie'; O.F. *magot* = F. *margot* + O.F. *pie*, Lat. *pica*. F. *margot*, 'a magpie—a talkative woman,' is a diminutive of *marguerite*, Lat. *margarita*, 'a pearl,' Gk. *μαργαρίτης*. The common abbreviation of the name *Margaret*, viz., *Mag* (or *Madge*), is seen in *mag-pie*. Variant forms of *magot-pie* were *maggoty-pie*, *magot o' pie*, *maggaty-pie*. Lat. *pica*, whence *pie*, may be from the root of *pingere*, 'to paint,' the name referring to the bird's spotted plumage. See *Cent. Dict.*

**marry**, corrupted from the name of the 'Virgin *Mary*'; cf. "Lady" and "by'r lady" = 'by our Lady,' i.e. the Virgin. Such expressions dated from the pre-Reformation times in England. The common meanings of *marry* are 'indeed, to be sure,' and 'why!'

**mask**, III. 1. 125, 'to conceal from'; literally 'to cover as with a mask or visor.' *Mask* meant (1) 'an entertainment in which the performers wore visors,' (2) 'a visor, disguise'; in the former sense the word was spelt *mask* and *masque*. Through F. *masque* from Arabic *maskharat*, 'a buffoon, jester; a pleasantry, sport.'

**mate**, V. 1. 77, 'to bewilder, confound.' Cf. *The Comedy of Errors*, V. 1. 281, "I think you are all mated or stark mad." Sometimes it has the stronger sense 'to overcome, subdue,' as in Bacon's *Essay Of Death*, "there is no passion in the minde of man so weake, but it mates and masters the feare of Death." Elizabethans also often use *amate*, e.g. Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*, 1. 9. 45:

"For never knight, that dared warlike deed,  
More luckless disaventures did amate."

Cf. Mayhew's gloss: "*Amate*, to daunt, subdue; O.F. *amatir*, from *mat*, weak. The O.F. *mat* was orig. a chess term, like our *mate* in *check-mate*, which represents the Pers. *sháh mât*, 'the king is dead.' *Mât* is of Semitic origin, being from the Arab. *mâta*, he died."

**mere**, 'absolute, utter.' Cf. "his mere enemy," *The Merchant of Venice*, III. 2. 265; "the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet," i.e. complete destruction, *Othello*, II. 2. 3, 4. Lat. *merus*, 'pure, unmixed.' So *merely* = 'absolutely, entirely,' e.g. in Bacon's *Essay Of Unity in Religion*, where he contrasts "points fundamental and of substance in religion" with "points not merely of faith, but of opinion, order, or good intention." See Bacon's *Essays*, Pitt Press ed. pp. 8, 171, 183.

**metaphysical**, I. 5. 27, 'supernatural.' Gk. *μετὰ τὰ φυσικά* (whence Lat. *metaphysica*, 'metaphysics') meant properly 'after the *Physics*,' and was a title applied to certain of Aristotle's works the study of which came after his *Physics*. But the preposition (*μετὰ*) or prefix in this title got to be regarded as meaning 'beyond,' 'above,' and *metaphysics* acquired the notion 'a science that is above or transcends physics,' 'supernatural science': whence the common Elizabethan use of *metaphysics* and *metaphysical*, as shown in our note. Gradually from the abstruse character of the subjects to which *metaphysics* was applied it got the idea 'philosophy,' more especially 'mental science, the study of the mind, psychology.' See *Cent. Dict.*

**mettle**, I. 7. 73, 'disposition, temper.' *Mettle* is only another spelling of *metal* (Lat. *metallum*); now it is used for the metaphorical senses—'temper, spirit'; cf. 'on his mettle.'

**minion**, I. 2. 19, 'favourite,' commonly in a bad sense; cf. 3 *Henry VI.* II. 2. 84, "Go, rate thy minions, proud insulting boy!" F. *mignon*, 'dainty,' which is of Teutonic origin; cf. old Germ. *minne*, 'love,' as in *minne-singer*, 'singer of love.' Old writers use *minion* = 'lover,' e.g. Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*, II. 2. 37 ("a mincing mineon").

**modern**, IV. 3. 165. Shakespeare always uses *modern* = 'commonplace, trite, ordinary': that which is 'in the *mode*' soon becomes trite and commonplace. Cf. *As You Like It*, II. 7. 156, "Full of wise saws and modern instances," i.e. trite illustrations. Constance in *King John*, III. 4. 42, speaks of death as a power "Which scorns a modern invocation," i.e. is deaf to ordinary entreaties.

**moe**, V. 3. 35. Middle E. *mo* from A.S. *mā*, 'more, others,' indicated number; *more*, from A.S. *māra*, 'greater,' indicated magnitude; now *more* serves both purposes. The root of each is that which we get in the verb *may*. In Elizabethan E. *moe* is frequent; cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, II. 3. 72, "Sing no more ditties, sing no moe."

**muse**, III. 4. 85, 'to wonder'; cf. *King John*, III. 1. 317, "I muse your majesty doth seem so cold." O.F. *muser* is probably the same as Ital. and Lat. *mussare*, 'to mutter, mumble, be in uncertainty'; a word of onomatopœic origin (like *mutter* and *mumble*), imitative of a low sound expressing wonder or meditation.

**napkin**, II. 3. 6, 'handkerchief,' as always in Shakespeare. The handkerchief which leads to such trouble between Othello and Desdemona is called a 'napkin'; cf. *Othello*, III. 3. 287, 290. F. *nappe*,

'cloth' + diminutive suffix *kin*; cognates *naper*, 'table-linen,' *apron* (= *a napron*).

**naught**, IV. 3. 220, = *naughty*, which is always used by Shakespeare = 'bad, good for *naught*'; cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, v. 91, "So shines a *good* deed in a *naughty* world." Cf. *Proverbs* vi. 12, "A *naughty* person, a wicked man." *Naught* = *ne*, the old negative + *ught*.

**near**, II. 3. 123. This is really the old comparative, the three forms of the three degrees in A.S. being *nēah* (positive), *nēar* (compar.), *nēahst* or *nēst* (superl.). The old comparative *near* = *neah-r*; the modern *nearer* is a double comparative.

**newt**, IV. 1. 14. The *n* has come from the indefinite article, a *newt* being = *an ewt*. For the opposite process, due to careless pronunciation, cf. *adder* (*an adder* = *a nadder*), *apron* (*an apron* = *a napron*). *Ewt* is contracted from Middle E. *evete*, 'lizard.'

**nice**; O.F. *nice*, Lat. *nescius*, 'ignorant.' *Nice* originally meant 'foolish' (a kindred notion to 'ignorant'), as in Chaucer; then 'foolishly particular, fastidious'—whence its common Shakespearian senses, e.g. 'very precise (IV. 3. 169), punctilious'; 'subtle, sophisticated,' since fastidiousness implies drawing fine, subtle distinctions'; 'coy, prudish'; 'petty, trivial,' as in a "nice offence" (*Julius Caesar*, IV. 3. 8), i.e. one that we should not be too particular in judging. The word is notable as having improved in meaning since Shakespeare's time.

**nonpareil**, III. 4. 19, 'one who has no equal'; F. *non*, 'not' + *pareil*, 'equal'; cf. Lat. *par*, 'equal.' Cf. *Twelfth Night*, 1. 5. 271—273:

"My lord and master loves you: O, such love  
 Could be but recompensed, though you were crown'd  
 The nonpareil of beauty!"

**oblivious**, v. 3. 43, 'causing forgetfulness'; like *obliviosus* in Horace's line *obliviosi pocula Massici* (*Odes*, II. 7. 21). Cf. *Paradise Lost*, 1. 264—266:

"But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,  
 The associates and co-partners of our loss,  
 Lie thus astonished on the oblivious pool?"

(Satan is referring to the fiery lake into which he and his rebel angels were hurled.)

**or ere**, IV. 3. 168, 'before'; really *or* and *ere* are the *same* word = A.S. *ǣr*, 'before.' We find another phrase, *or ever*; cf. *Proverbs* viii. 23, "I was set up from everlasting, ... or ever the earth was." Perhaps



*or ere* arose through confusion with *or ever*, people supposing wrongly that *ere*, like *e'er*, was short for *ever* (A.S. *æfre*).

**owe**, I. 3. 76, I. 4. 10, 'to own, possess.' *Owe* meant originally 'to possess,' being closely akin to *own*; then 'to possess another's property,' and so 'to be in debt for.' Its varied use is well illustrated by *King John*, II. I. 247, 248:

"To pay that duty which you truly owe  
To him that owes it, namely this young prince."

**paddock**, I. I. 9, 'a toad'; Middle E. *padde*, 'a toad,' + the diminutive suffix *ock* (as in *bullock*, *hillock*, *hammock*). *Pad* was a common word for 'toad'; old writers speak of *pad-stool* and *paddock-stool* for 'toad-stool.' "A *pad* in the straw" was a popular phrase for 'a hidden danger,' 'a snake in the grass'—e.g. "Here lyes in dede the padde within the strawe" (proverb). Icelandic *padda*; Danish *padde*. Editors refer to Herrick's pretty poem, "Another Grace for a Child" in *Noble Numbers*:

"Here a little child I stand  
Heaving up my either hand,  
Cold as paddocks though they be,  
Here I lift them up to Thee,  
For a benison to fall  
On our meat and on us all. Amen."

**passion**, III. 4. 57; any strong emotion, feeling, especially great grief; cf. *King Lear*, v. 3. 198, "'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief." Lat. *passio*, 'suffering, feeling,' from *pati*, 'to suffer.'

**patch**, v. 3. 15, 'a fool, simpleton'; cf. *The Tempest*, III. 2. 71, "What a pied ninny's this! Thou scurvy patch!" The professional jester or fool attached to a court or nobleman's house was called a *patch* from his *patch*-like, 'motley' dress: hence 'Patch' became a kind of nickname; Wolsey had two jesters so named.

**peak**, I. 3. 23, 'to waste away, grow emaciated'; perhaps from the noun *peak* (= anything sharp-pointed) used in reference to the sharpened features of a sick person: if so, akin to *pike*. See *Cent. Dict.*

**pent-house**, I. 3. 20. From O.F. *apentis*, 'a shed,' we get (1) *appendice*; (2) the shortened form *pentice* or *pentise*; and then, (3) from *pentise*, the corrupted form 'pent-house,' due partly to the idea 'a sloping building,' partly to the resemblance of sound between *ise* carelessly pronounced and *house*. For the form *pentise* the *Cent. Dict.* quotes Fairfax, *Tasso*, x. 33:

"And o'er their heads an iron pentise vast  
They built, by joyning many a shield and targe."

*Pent*, in O.F. *apentis*, is from *pente*, 'a slope'; cf. *pendre*, Lat. *pendere*. So *cutlass* (F. *coutelas*) got corrupted into *curtle-axe* from a similarity of sound which made people think that the weapon was a sort of *axe*. 'Popular etymology,' i.e. common and incorrect notions as to the origin of words, influences the form often; cf. *cray-fish*, where *-fish* is a corruption of *-visse* in F. *écrevisse*.

**posset**, II. 2. 6. The *Cent. Dict.* says: "A drink composed of hot milk curdled by some infusion, as wine or other liquor, formerly much in favour both as a luxury and as medicine"; taken just before bedtime. We have the verb in the sense 'curdle' in *Hamlet*, I. 5. 68 (speaking of the effect of a poison):

"And with a sudden vigour it doth posset  
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
The thin and wholesome blood."

There used to be '*posset-cups*.' Probably *posset* is a Celtic word; Irish *pusoid*; cf. Welsh *posel*, 'curdled milk.'

**proof**. F. *preuve*, Low Lat. *proba*, 'a test,' from Lat. *probare*; it was specially used of impenetrable armour, meaning the armour itself, as in I. 2. 54, or its resisting power. All steel used for armour, swords etc. is tested.

**prowess**, v. 8. 41; O.F. *proecce*, 'bravery, valour,' from *prou*, an old form of *preux*, 'brave,' as in *preux chevalier*, 'a valiant knight.' *Preux* is of disputed origin; not connected with Lat. *probus*, 'excellent.'

**quarry**, IV. 3. 201, 'a heap of slaughtered game'; a hunting-term. O.F. *cuiree*, the intestines of a slain animal, the part given to the hounds; so called because wrapped in the skin—F. *cuir*, 'a skin, hide,' from Lat. *corium*, 'hide.'

**quell**, I. 7. 72, 'murder.' Cf. *man-queller* = 'murderer' in 2 *Henry IV.* II. 1. 58; also in the *Life of Richard III.*, "mannequellers, whome Godde badde to...kyll yf theyr murther were wylfull," p. 28 (Pitt Press ed.). A.S. *cwellan* = 'to kill,' the causal verb of *cwelan*, 'to die' (whence *quail*, 'to fear, fail in spirit').

**rapt**, I. 3. 57, 142, 'transported.' It should be written *rapped*, being the past participle of an old verb *rap*, 'to seize hurriedly,' cognate with Germ. *raffen*, 'to snatch.' The *Cent. Dict.* quotes from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1522): "Think ye...that they will not pluck from you whatsoever they can rap or reave?" For the figurative sense, cf. *Cymbeline*, I. 6. 51, "What...Thus raps you?" i.e. what transports you thus? The form *rapt* comes through confusion with Lat. *raptus*, the p. p. of Lat. *rapere*, 'to seize.'

**ravel**, II. 2. 37. "The original sense has reference to the untwisting of a string or woven texture, the ends of the threads of which become afterwards entangled"—*Skeat*. Shakespeare uses *ravel* = 'to entangle,' as in II. 2. 37, and *ravel out* = 'to unweave or disentangle'; cf. *Hamlet*, III. 4. 186, "Make you to ravel all this matter out." Dutch *ravelen*.

**ravin**, 'prey' (F. *ravine*, Lat. *rapina*); cf. *The Faerie Queene*, I. 11. 12 (the description of the 'Old Dragon'):

"his deepe devouring jawes  
Wyde gaped, like the griesly mouth of hell,  
Through which into his darke abysses all ravin fell."

Hence **ravin** (II. 4. 28) used as a verb = 'to devour greedily, as an animal its prey,' and **ravined** = 'ravenous' (IV. 1. 24).

**relation**, IV. 3. 168, 'account, report.' Cf. Milton, *Paradise Regained*, II. 182, "Have we not seen, or by relation heard?" F. *relation* retains this sense; cf. the verb *relate*.

**remorse**, I. 5. 42, 'pity'; cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1. 20, "Thou'lt show...mercy and remorse" (said to Shylock). A commoner meaning in Shakespeare than 'compunction, regret' (literally 'biting again,' viz. of conscience—Lat. *remordere*). A feeling of pity is akin to a feeling of regret where one's action has caused the state or thing that is pitiful.

**ronyon**, I. 3. 6, literally 'a mangy creature'; hence used as a term of great contempt, like the cognate word *roynish*, 'scabby, scurvy' and so 'wretched, low.' Cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. 2. 194, 195, "you hag, you baggage, you polecat, you ronyon!" One of the courtiers in *As You Like It*, II. 2. 8, contemptuously calls Touchstone "the roynish clown." O.F. *roigne*, Lat. *robigo*, 'a scab'; cf. mod. F. *rogneux*, 'scurvy.'

**sag**, V. 3. 10, 'to droop'; literally 'to sink down from weakness or overweight.' In the literal sense *sag* is current in provincial dialects in England, and "a word of everyday use in America among mechanics and engineers." Figuratively it survives as a Stock-Exchange term to describe a "depressed market"; cf. the following extract from a financial paper: "Immediately the conclusion was jumped to that some serious complication with France had arisen, and everything sagged away," i.e. prices gave way all round. Middle E. *saggen*, from Swedish *sacka*, 'to settle, sink down'; cognate with Germ. *sacken*, 'to sink,' each being probably akin to *sink*.

**scape**; originally short for *escape*, it became an independent form

and should be printed *scape*, not *'scape*. Literally 'to slip out of one's cape' (Lat. *ex + cappa*), and so 'to steal off'; cf. F. *échapper*.

**scotch**, III. 2. 13; contracted from *scotch* = *scartch*, a transposed form of *scratch*. The fact that the older uncontracted form was *scortch* may account for the 1st Folio's reading, *scorch'd*. There is no connection with *scutch*, 'to beat like flax,' *scutcher*, 'a flail.' Isaac Walton's recipe (*Complete Angler*) for cooking a chub was: "Give him three or four scotches or cuts on the back with your knife, and broil him on charcoal." In masonry *scotching* is a term for dressing stone by chipping it out with a chisel in a particular way. Note that the ordinary verb *scorch* is probably connected, not with F. *écorcher*, 'to flay,' but with *shrug* and *shrink*. See *Cent. Dict.*

**sear**, or **sere**; literally 'dry,' A.S. *sēar*. Commonly said of flowers or leaves (v. 3. 23), with the sense 'faded,' 'withered,' as in *Lycidas*, 2, "ivy never sere." Cf. Tennyson's *Ode to Memory*:

"Those peerless flowers which in the rudest wind never grow sere."

**security**, III. 5. 32. Elizabethan writers often use the adjective *secure* = Lat. *securus*, 'careless, free from fear'; especially to imply over-confidence, a false sense of safety. Cf. *Henry V.* Chorus, IV. 17, where "the *confident* French" are described as "Proud of their numbers and secure in soul"; and Fletcher's quibbling lines:

"To secure yourselves from these,  
Be not too secure in ease."

Bacon in his *Essay Of Adversitie* introduces thus a saying of Seneca: "It is true greatnesse, to have in one [i.e. at once] the frailty of a man and the security of a God" (*securitatem Dei*); where Mr West aptly illustrates (Pitt Press ed. p. 185) by Ben Jonson's line:

"Men may *securely* sin, but *safely* never."

**seel**, III. 2. 46; properly a term from falconry, meaning to close up the eyelids of young hawks, either partially or entirely, by passing a fine thread through them; this was done till they became tractable and patient of the hood (Nares). Elizabethans have the word often in the sense 'to close'; cf. Spenser, describing a wounded deer (*The Faerie Queene*, II. 1. 38):

"Whiles the sad pang approaching shee does feele,  
Brayes out her latest breath, and up her eyes doth seele."

See also *The Faerie Queene*, I. 7. 23; Bacon's *Essay Of Ambition* (Pitt Press ed. p. 113). Sometimes *seel* is misspelt *seal*, as in the Quartos in *Othello*, III. 3. 210, "To seel her father's eyes up close as oak."

F. *siller* or *ciller*, 'to close up the eyelids'; from F. *cil*, Lat. *cilium*, 'an eyelid.'

**sennet**; a term frequent in Elizabethan stage-directions for a set of notes on a trumpet, sounded as a signal, e.g. of entrance (III. 1. 10) or departure; different from a 'flourish' (I. 4. 58). Sometimes spelt *signet*, which shows the derivation—O.F. *signet*, Lat. *signum*, 'a sign.'

**sewer**, I. 7; a chief servant in a royal or noble household whose duty was to arrange the dishes on the table. "Sewer and seneshal" (steward) is a favourite alliterative combination. Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IX. 36—38, describing scenes of chivalry with

"gorgeous knights

At joust and tournament; then marshall'd feast

Served up in hall with sewers and seneshals";

and Scott, *Marmion*, I. 3:

"And joyfully that knight did call,

To sewer, squire, and seneshal."

The *sewer* had also to act as the king's "taster" and "take the *assay*" (= *essay*, trial, test) of each dish, i.e. taste it for fear of poison before the king ate of it. Note, however, that *sewer* has no etymological connection with F. *essayeur*, 'a taster, trier' (though there may have been some confusion between the words); nor with *sew*, 'pottage, mess,' A.S. *seaw*. The *Cent. Dict.* considers *sewer* short for *assewer*, a word which occurs in household ordinances and accounts; F. *asseour*, 'one who sets the table,' from *asseoir*, 'to set, place,' originally 'to sit by' (Lat. *assidere*).

**shard**, or **sherd**, III. 2. 42; A.S. *sceard*, 'a fragment,' especially of pottery—cf. *potsherd*; literally 'a cut thing.' A.S. *sceran*, 'to cut, shear'; cf. Germ. *scheren*, and Gk. *kelpew*: all from an ultimate Aryan root *skar*, 'to cut.'

**skirr**, v. 3. 35, 'to scour'; also written *scur*, which shows its connection with *scurry* and *scour*. It is used in *Henry V.* IV. 7. 64, with the sense to 'hurry off, move away rapidly':

"we will come to them,

And make them skirr away, as swift as stones

Enforced from the old Assyrian slings."

So in the old play *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (once attributed to Shakespeare), III. 2. 4, 5:

"So many battles have I overpass'd,

And made the French skirr, when they heard my name."

**sleave**, II. 2. 37, or **sleeve**. The *Century Dict.* says: "Anything matted or raveled; hence; unspun silk; the knotted and entangled part of silk or thread." Cognate in the Swedish *slejf*, 'a knot of ribbon,' Germ. *schleife*, 'a loop, knot'; from the root of *slip*.

**sliver**, IV. 1. 28, 'to tear off' (a branch); A.S. *slifan*, 'to cleave.' Cf. *King Lear*, IV. 2. 34—36:

"She that herself will sliver and disbranch  
From her material sap, perforce must wither  
And come to deadly use."

So the noun *sliver* = 'a small broken branch' in *Hamlet*, IV. 7. 174, in the description of Ophelia's drowning—how "an envious sliver" of the willow tree, on which she had clambered to hang her garlands, broke.

**sore**, II. 2. 38, II. 4. 3, 'grievous.' Middle E. *sore*, *sare*, from A.S. *sar*, 'painful.' **sorry** (II. 2. 21) = *sore* + the termination *y*, and has no etymological connection with *sorrow*; though from similarity of form *sorry* has come to be used as the adjective of *sorrow*. *Sore* is of Teutonic origin; cf. Germ. *sehr*, 'very' = the adverb *sore*, 'painfully, very.'

**suggestion**, I. 3. 134, 'temptation, evil prompting.' Cf. *suggest* = 'to tempt, incite to do evil,' e.g. in *Richard II.* III. 4. 75, 76:

"What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested thee  
To make a second fall of cursed man?"

**surcease**, I. 7. 4, 'cessation, stop'; properly a legal term = 'the arrest or stoppage of a legal suit'; O.F. *sursis*, from O.F. *surseoir*, 'to pause' = Lat. *supersedere*, 'to forbear.' The word is commoner as a verb; cf. *Coriolanus*, III. 2. 120, 121:

"I will not do't,  
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth."

Note that *surcease* is quite distinct from (though its form may have been affected by) *cease* = F. *cesser*, Lat. *cessare*.

**thane**; a title of honour, roughly equivalent to 'Earl,' originally an old English word for 'a warrior, knight at a king's court.' Icelandic *þegn*; cognate with Germ. *degen*, 'a warrior,' from *gedeihen*, 'to thrive, grow up.'

**thrall**, III. 6. 13; from Icelandic *þrall*, 'a serf,' Danish *træl*; no doubt, *thrall* came into England through the Danes. Strictly it meant 'a runner,' i.e. on messages, the original root being that seen in Gk. *τρέχειν*, 'to run.' The notion that *thrall* comes from *thrill*, because the ears of serfs were *thrilled* or *drilled*, i.e. pierced, is wrong.

**toy**, II. 3. 76, 'a worthless thing, a trifle.' Cf. *2 Henry IV.* II. 4. 183, "Shall we fall foul for toys?" i.e. quarrel about trifles. So in *Lucrece*, 214, "Who sells eternity to get a toy?" Dutch *tuig*, 'stuff, trash'; akin to Germ. *zeug*, e.g. in *spielzeug*, 'playthings.'

**trains**, IV. 3. 113, 'snares, allurements, artifices.' The magician in *Comus*, hoping to get a new victim into his power, says (150, 151):

"Now to my charms,  
And to my wily trains!"

Cf. *Samson Agonistes*, 533, "venereal snares" = snares of love (Venus). Bacon writes of Richard III., "it was noted...that even in the time of King Edward his brother he was not without secret trains and mines to turn envy and hatred on his brother's government" (*History of Henry VII.*, Pitt Press ed. p. 6). F. *trainer*, from Lat. *trahere*, 'to draw,' in Late Lat. 'to betray'—from the metaphor of drawing birds into snares.

**trammel**, I. 7. 3. O.F. *tramail* = Ital. *tramaglio*, 'a fish-net, a bird-net,' from mediæval Lat. *tramacula*, the earlier form of which seems to have been *trimacula*, 'a three-mesh net,' i.e. a net of three layers, different in the sizes of the meshes; from Lat. *tres* (*tri* in compounds), + *macula*, 'a mesh.' *Mail* in 'chain-mail,' a kind of armour made in meshes, comes from *macula* ('a spot,' hence 'a hole or mesh like a spot') and is therefore cognate with the latter part of 'trammel.' See *Cent. Dict.*

**wassail**, I. 7. 64, 'carousing, drinking.' Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. 2. 317, 318:

"He is wit's pedler, and retails his wares  
At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs."

*Wassail* is the old northern English *wes heil* (A.S. = *wes hāl*), 'be whole' = the imperative of *wesan*, 'to be' + *heil*, cognate with *whole* and *hale*. Originally *wassail* was a salutation, like the German use of *prosit!* ('may it benefit you'), used in drinking a man's health; then it came to mean 'a drinking, carousing, revel.' The '*wassail*-bowl' was a great feature of the old Christmas feasting. It is one of Scott's archaic words; cf. *Marmion*, V. 7:

"Old Holy-Rood rang merrily  
That night with wassell, mirth and glee."

Milton has *wassailer* = 'reveller,' *Comus*, 179 ("late wassailers").

**weird**, I. 3. 32; properly a noun meaning 'fate, destiny'; A.S. *wyrd*, 'fate,' literally 'that which happens,' from *weorðan*, 'to become, to take place'; cf. Germ. *werden*. In old writers 'the Weirds' are the Fates; cf. Chaucer's translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*: "Who-so it be that...hath put under fote the proude *weerd*es..." See also **Extract 1** from Holinshed. As an adjective *weird* has passed through these stages: 'witch-like, supernatural; wild; uncanny, mysterious.'

**wreck**; in the 1st Folio always spelt *wrack*, the usual form till late in the 17th century, and in some passages of Shakespeare the rhyme requires it. Cf. v. 5. 51, 52. From A.S. *wrecan*, 'to drive,' the *wrack* or *wreck* being that which is driven ashore.

**yesty**, IV. 1. 53, 'foamy, frothy'; a variant form of *yeasty*. Cf. Tennyson, *The Sailor Boy*,

"The sands and yeasty surges mix  
 In caves about the dreary bay,  
 And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,  
 And in thy heart the scrawl shall play."

*Yeast* is from the Aryan root which gives us: (1) Gk. ζέειν, 'to boil,' ζεστός, 'fervent,' and E. *zeal*; and (2) such Teutonic words as A.S. *gyst*, 'yeast,' Dutch *gest*, and Germ. *gähren*, 'to ferment.'



## EXTRACTS FROM HOLINSHED THAT ILLUSTRATE "MACBETH."

### "The merciless Macdonwald" and "Sweno, the Norways' king."

In his references to Macdonwald's rebellion and Sweno's invasion, and to the services of Macbeth and Banquo against them, Shakespeare has drawn on Holinshed no less than in the rest of the play. It does not seem necessary, however, to reproduce in full the chronicler's somewhat lengthy account of these prefatory incidents<sup>1</sup>. Our Extracts will deal with the events which constitute the main story of *Macbeth*, viz. Macbeth's murder of the king, usurpation of the throne, reign and end.

### "The Weird Sisters."

1. 'Shortlie after [the conclusion of peace with the Danes and Norwayens] happened a strange and vncouth<sup>2</sup> woonder, which afterward was the cause of much trouble in the realme of Scotland, as ye shall after heare. It fortun'd as Makbeth and Banquho iournied towards Fores, where the king then laie<sup>3</sup>, they went sporting by the waie together without other companie, saue onelie themselues, passing thorough the woods and fields, when suddenlie in the midst of a laund<sup>4</sup>, there met them three women in strange and *wild* apparell, re-

<sup>1</sup> Brief quotations from Holinshed containing special points of interest connected with Scene 2 are given in the Notes to it. I must mention that all the Extracts in this section of this volume are taken from Furness, and the historical comments here, and in the Notes, from Furness or Stone—mostly from the latter. The italics draw attention to verbal resemblances.

<sup>2</sup> mysterious, unfamiliar.

<sup>3</sup> lodged, resided.

<sup>4</sup> an open space in a wood.

sembling creatures of elder world<sup>1</sup>, whome when they attentiuely beheld, woondering much at the sight, the first of them spake and said: "*All haile Makbeth, thane of Glammis*" (for he had latelie entered into that dignitie and office *by the death of his father Sinell*). The second of them said: "*Haile Makbeth thane of Cawder.*" But the third said: "*All haile Makbeth that heereafter shalt be king of Scotland.*"

'Then Banquho: "What manner of women (saith he) are you, that seeme so little fauourable vnto me, whereas to my fellow heere, besides high offices, ye assigne also the kingdome, appointing foorth nothing for me at all?" "Yes" (saith the first of them) "we promise greater benefits vnto thee, than vnto him, for he shall reigne in deed, but with an vnluckie end: neither shall he leaue anie issue behind him to succeed in his place, where<sup>2</sup> contrarilie thou in deed shalt not reigne at all, but of thee those shall be borne which shall gouern the Scottish kingdome by long order of continuall descent." Herewith the foresaid women vanished immediatlie out of their sight.'

**"Glamis, and thane of Cawdor!  
The greatest is behind!"**

2. 'This was reputed at the first but some vaine *fantasticall*<sup>3</sup> illusion by Mackbeth and Banquho, insomuch that Banquho would call Mackbeth in iest, king of Scotland; and Mackbeth againe would call him in sport likewise, the father of manie kings. But afterwards the common opinion was, that these women were either *the weird sisters*, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, or else some nymphs or feiries, indued with knowledge of prophesie by their necromanticall science, bicause euerie thing came to passe as they had spoken. For shortlie after, the thane of Cawder being condemned at Fores of treason against the king committed; his lands, liuings, and offices were giuen of the kings liberalitie to Mackbeth.

'The same night after, at supper, Banquho iested with him and said: "Now Mackbeth thou hast obtained those things which the two former sisters prophesied, there remaineth onelie for thee to purchase<sup>4</sup> that which the third said should come to passe." Wherevpon Mackbeth reuoluing the thing in his mind, began euen then to devise how he might attaine to the kingdome: but yet he thought with himselfe that he must tarie a time, which should aduance him thereto (by the diuine prouidence) as it had come to passe in his former preferment.'

<sup>1</sup> old-world.

<sup>2</sup> whereas.

<sup>3</sup> unreal, imaginary.

<sup>4</sup> gain.

“The Prince of Cumberland.”

3. ‘But shortlie after it chanced that king Duncane, hauing two sonnes by his wife which was the daughter of Siward earle of Northumberland, *he made the elder of them called Malcolme prince of Cumberland*, as it were thereby to appoint him his successor in the kingdome, immediatlie after his deceasse. Mackbeth sore troubled herewith, for that he saw by this means his hope sore hindered (where<sup>1</sup>, by the old lawes of the realme, the ordinance was, that if he that should succeed were not of able age to take the charge vpon himselfe, he that was next of bloud vnto him should be admitted) he began to take counsell how he might vsurpe the kingdome by force, hauing a iust quarell so to doo (as he tooke the matter) for that Duncane did what in him lay to defraud him of all maner of title and claime, which he might in time to come, pretend<sup>2</sup> vnto the crowne.’

“What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan?”

4. ‘The words of the three weird sisters also (of whom before ye haue heard) greatlie encouraged him herevnto, but specialie his wife lay sore vpon him to attempt the thing, as she that was verie ambitious, burning in vnquencheable desire to beare the name of a queene. At length therefore, communicating his purposed intent with his trustie friends, amongst whome Banquho was the chiefest, vpon confidence of their promised aid, he slue the king at Enuerns, or (as some say) at Botgosuane, in the sixt yeare of his reigne. Then hauing a companie about him of such as he had made priuie to his enterprise, he caused himselfe to be proclaimed king, and foorthwith *went vnto Scone*, where (by common consent) he receiued the *inuesture* of the kingdome according to the accustomed maner. The bodie of Duncane was first conueied vnto Elgine, & there buried in kinglie wise; but afterwards it was remoued and conueied *vnto Colmekill*, and there laid in a sepulture amongst his *predecessors*, in the yeare after the birth of our Sauour, 1046.’

It will be observed that Holinshed gives no particulars of Duncan’s murder. For these, says Mr Stone, Shakespeare “turned to the murder of King Duff by Donwald. Duff, as we have seen [i.e. in Holinshed’s account] suffered from the effects of witchcraft. Regaining his former health after the witches’ charm had been broken, he put to death the instigators of the sorcery practised against him.”

<sup>1</sup> whereas.

<sup>2</sup> put forward.

**“He’s here in double trust.”**

5. ‘Amongest them’ (continues Holinshed) ‘there were also certeine yoong gentlemen, right beautifull and goodlie personages, being neere of kin vnto Donwald capteine of the castell of Fores, and had beene persuaded to be partakers with the other rebels, more through the fraudulent counsell of diuerse wicked persons, than of their owne accord: wherevpon the foresaid Donwald lamenting their case, made earnest labor and sute to the king to haue begged their pardon; but hauing a plaine deniall<sup>1</sup>, he conceiued such an inward malice towards the king, (though he shewed it not outwardlie at the first) that the same continued still boiling in his stomach, and ceased not, till through setting on of his wife, and in reuenge of such vnthankefulnesse, hee found meanes to murther the king within the foresaid castell of Fores where he vsed to soiourne. For the king being in that countrie, was accustomed to lie most commonlie within the same castell, hauing a speciall trust in Donwald, as a man whom he neuer suspected.

‘But Donwald, not forgetting the reproch which his linage had susteined by the execution of those his kinsmen, whome the king for a spectacle<sup>2</sup> to the people had caused to be hanged, could not but shew manifest tokens of great grieffe at home amongst his familie: which his wife perceiuing, ceased not to trauell<sup>3</sup> with him, till she vnderstood what the cause was of his displeasure. Which at length when she had learned by his owne relation<sup>4</sup>, she as one that bare no lesse malice in hir heart towards the king, for the like cause on hir behalfe, than hir husband did for his friends, counselled him (sith the king oftentimes vsed to lodge in his house without anie gard about him, other than the garrison of the castell, which was wholie at his commandement) to make him awaie, and shewed him the meanes wherby he might soonest accomplish it.’

**“He hath been in unusual pleasure, and  
Sent forth great largess.”**

6. ‘Donwald thus being the more kindled in wrath by the words of his wife, determined to follow hir aduise in the execution of so heinous an act. Whervpon deuising with himselfe for a while, which way hee might best accomplish his cursed intent, at length he gat opportunitie,

<sup>1</sup> refusal.      <sup>2</sup> as a warning.      <sup>3</sup> travail, i.e. importune him.

<sup>4</sup> report, account.

and sped<sup>1</sup> his purpose as followeth. It chanced that the king vpon the daie before he purposed to depart fourth of the castell, was long in his oratorie at his praier, and there continued till it was late in the night. At the last, comming fourth, he called such afore him as had faithfullie serued him in pursute and apprehension of the rebels, and giuing them heartie thanks, he bestowed sundrie honorable gifts amongst them, of the which number Donwald was one, as he that had beene euer accounted a most faithfull seruant to the king.'

"His two chamberlains

Will I with wine and wassail so convince."

7. 'At length, hauing talked with them a long time, he got him into his priue chamber, onelie with *two of his chamberlains*, who hauing brought him to bed, came fourth againe, and then fell to banketting with Donwald and his wife, who had prepared diuerse delicate dishes, and sundrie sorts of drinks for their reare<sup>2</sup> supper or collation, wherat they sate vp so long, till they had charged their stomachs with such full gorges, that their heads were no sooner got to the pillow, but asleepe they were so fast, that a man might haue remooued the chamber ouer them, sooner than to haue awaked them out of their droonken sleepe.

'Then Donwald, though he abhorred the act greatlie in his heart, yet through instigation of his wife, hee called foure of his seruants vnto him (whome he had made priue to his wicked intent before, and framed to his purpose with large gifts) and now declaring vnto them, after what sort<sup>3</sup> they should worke the feat<sup>4</sup>, they gladlie obeyed his instructions, & speedilie going about the murther, they enter the chamber (in which the king laie) a little before cocks crow, where they secretlie cut his throte as he lay sleeping, without anie buskling<sup>5</sup> at all: and immediatlie by a posterne gate they caried fourth the dead bodie into the fields, and throwing it vpon an horsse there prouided readie for that purpose, they conuey it vnto a place, about two miles distant from the castell, where they staid, and gat certeine labourers to helpe them to turne the course of a little riuier running through the fields there, and digging a deepe hole in the channell, they burie the bodie in the same, ramming it vp with stones and grauell so closelie, that setting the water in the right course againe, no man could perceiue that anie thing had beene newlie digged there. This they did by order ap-

<sup>1</sup> successfully executed.

<sup>2</sup> dessert.

<sup>3</sup> manner.

<sup>4</sup> deed.

<sup>5</sup> noise.

pointed them by Donwald as is reported, for that<sup>1</sup> the bodie should not be found, & by bleeding (when Donwald should be present) declare him to be guiltie of the murther. For such an opinion men haue, that the dead corps of anie man being slaine, will bleed abundantlie if the murtherer be present. But for what consideration<sup>2</sup> soeuer they buried him there, they had no sooner finished the worke, but that they slue them whose helpe they vsed herein, and streightwaies therevpon fled into Orknie.’

**“To show an unfelt sorrow is an office  
Which the false man does easy.”**

8. ‘Donwald, about the time that the murther was in dooing, got him amongst them that kept the watch, and so continued in companie with them all the residue of the night. But in the morning when the noise was raised in the kings chamber how the king was slaine, his bodie conueied awaie, and the bed all beraied<sup>3</sup> with bloud; he with the watch ran thither, as though he had knowne nothing of the matter, and breaking into the chamber, and finding cakes of bloud in the bed, and on the floore about the sides of it, he forthwith slue the chamberleins, as guiltie of that heinous murther, and then like a mad man running to and fro, he ransacked euerie corner within the castell, as though it had beene to haue seene if he might haue found either the bodie, or anie of the murtherers hid in anie priuie place: but at length comming to the posterne gate, and finding it open, he burdened the chamberleins, whome he had slaine, with all the fault, they hauing the keies of the gates committed to their keeping all the night, and therefore it could not be otherwise (said he) but that they were of counsell<sup>4</sup> in the committing of that most detestable murther.

: ‘Finallie, such was his ouer earnest diligence in the seuerer inquisition<sup>5</sup> and triall of the offenders heerein, that some of the lords began to mislike<sup>6</sup> the matter, and to smell forth shrewd tokens, that he should not be altogether cleare<sup>7</sup> himselfe. But for so much<sup>8</sup> as they were in that countrie, where hee had the whole rule, what by reason of his friends and authoritie together, they doubted<sup>9</sup> to vtter what they thought, till time and place should better serue therevnto, and heerevpon got them awaie euerie man to his home.’

<sup>1</sup> in order that.

<sup>2</sup> reason.

<sup>3</sup> defiled.

<sup>4</sup> privy to.

<sup>5</sup> examination.

<sup>6</sup> to feel dissatisfied, be suspicious about.

<sup>7</sup> innocent of the murder.

<sup>8</sup> inasmuch as.

<sup>9</sup> were afraid.

“Unnatural,  
Even like the deed.”

9. ‘For the space of six moneths together, after this heinous murder thus committed, there appeared no sunne by day, nor moone by night in anie part of the realme, but still<sup>1</sup> was the skie couered with continuall clouds, and sometimes suche outragious windes arose, with lightnings and tempests, that the people were in great feare of present<sup>2</sup> destruction.

‘Monstrous sights also that were seene within the Scottish kingdome that yeere’ [that is, of King Duff’s murder, A.D. 972] ‘were these, *horses* in Louthian, being of singular *beautie* and swiftnesse, did *eat their owne flesh*, and would in no wise taste anie other meate. In Angus there was a gentle woman brought<sup>3</sup> foorth a child without eies, nose, hand, or foot. There was a *sparhawke* also strangled *by an owle*.’

“Malcolm and Donalbain, the king’s two sons,  
Are stol’n away and fled.”

Here the narrative reverts to the story of Duncan’s murder and the events that followed.

10. ‘Malcolme Cammore and Donald Bane the sons of king Duncane, for feare of their liues (which they might well know that Mackbeth would seeke to bring to end for his more sure confirmation in the estate) fled into Cumberland, where Malcolme remained, till time that saint Edward the sonne of Etheldred recouered the dominion of England from the Danish power, the which Edward receiued Malcolme by way of most friendlie enterteinment: but Donald passed ouer into Ireland, where he was tenderlie cherished by the king of that land.’

**Macbeth’s reign.**

“Two months,” says Mr Stone—“the utmost dramatic time including intervals, which can fairly be assigned to this play—left Shakespeare no room to set forth Duncan’s murderer as other than a graceless tyrant, led rapidly on from crime to crime. But the following passages [in Holinshed] bear witness that ten of the seventeen years of Macbeth’s reign were distinguished by a just though rigorous government, harmful to none save lawbreakers and oppressors of the weak.”

11. ‘Mackbeth, after the departure thus of Duncanes sonnes, vsed

<sup>1</sup> ever, always.

<sup>2</sup> immediate.

<sup>3</sup> who brought forth.

great liberalitie towards the nobles of the realme, thereby to win their fauour, and when he saw that no man went about<sup>1</sup> to trouble him, he set his whole intention to mainteine iustice, and to punish all enormities and abuses, which had chanced through the feeble and slouthfull administration of Duncane...Mackbeth shewing himselfe thus a most diligent punisher of all iniuries and wrongs attempted by anie disordered persons within his realme, was accounted the sure defense and buckler of innocent people; and hereto he also applied his whole indeuor, to cause yoong men to exercise themselues in vertuous maners, and men<sup>2</sup> of the church to attend<sup>3</sup> their diuine seruice according to their vocations.

‘To be briefe, such were the woorthie dooings and princelie acts of this Mackbeth in the administration of the realme, that if he had attained therevnto by rightfull means, and continued in vprightnesse of iustice as he began, till the end of his reigne, he might well haue bene numbred amongst the most noble princes that anie where had reigned. He made manie holesome laws and statutes for the publike weale of his subjects.’

**“Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep.”**

12. ‘These and the like commendable lawes Makbeth caused to be put as then<sup>4</sup> in vse, gouerning the realme for the space of ten yeares in equall<sup>5</sup> iustice. But this was but a counterfet zeale of equitie shewed by him, partlie against his naturall inclination to purchase thereby the fauour of the people. Shortlie after, he began to shew what he was, in stead of equitie practising crueltie. For the pricke of conscience (as it chanceth euer in tyrants, and such as atteine to anie estate by vnrighteous means) caused him euer to feare, least he should be serued of the same cup as he had ministred to his predecessor. The words also of the three weird sisters, would not out of his mind, which as they promised him the kingdome, so likewise did they promise it at the same time vnto the posteritie of Banquho. He willed<sup>6</sup> therefore the same Banquho with his sonne named Fleance, to come to a supper that he had prepared for them, which was in deed, as he had deuised, present<sup>7</sup> death at the hands of certeine murderers, whom he hired to execute that deed, appointing them to meete with the same Banquho and his sonne *without*<sup>8</sup> the palace, as they returned to their lodgings, and there to slea them, so that he would not haue his house slandered, but that in time

<sup>1</sup> sought.

<sup>2</sup> the clergy.

<sup>3</sup> attend to.

<sup>4</sup> as then = then.

<sup>5</sup> impartial.

<sup>6</sup> ordered.

<sup>7</sup> immediate.

<sup>8</sup> outside.



to come he might *cleare* himselfe, if anie thing were laid to his charge vpon anie suspicion that might arise.

‘It chanced yet by the benefit of the darke night, that though the father were slaine, the sonne yet by the helpe of almightie God reseruing him to better fortune, escaped that danger: and afterwards hauing some inking (by the admonition of some friends which he had in the court) how his life was sought no lesse than his fathers, who was slaine not by chancemedlie<sup>1</sup> (as by the handling of the matter Makbeth would haue had it to appeare) but euen vpon a prepensed<sup>2</sup> deuise: wherevpon to auoid further perill he fled into Wales.’

“**This tyrant.**”

13. ‘But ye shall vnderstand that after the contriued<sup>3</sup> slaughter of Banquho, nothing prospered with the foresaid Makbeth: for in maner euerie man began to doubt<sup>4</sup> his owne life, and durst vnneth<sup>5</sup> appeare in the kings presence; and euen as there were manie that stood in feare of him, so likewise stood he in feare of manie, in such sort that he began to make those awaie by one surmised cauillation<sup>6</sup> or other, whome he thought most able to worke him anie displeasure.

‘At length he found such sweetnesse by putting his nobles thus to death, that his earnest thirst after bloud in this behalfe might in no wise be satisfied: for ye must consider he wan double profite (as hee thought) hereby: for first they were rid out of the way whome he feared, and then againe his coffers were inriched by their goods which were forfeited to his vse, whereby he might the better mainteine a gard of armed men about him to defend his person from iniurie of them whom he had in anie suspicion. Further, to the end he might the more cruellie oppresse his subiects with all tyrantlike wrongs, he builded a strong castell on the top of an hie hill called Dunsinane, situate in Gowrie, ten miles from Perth, on such a proud height, that standing there aloft, a man might behold well neere all the countries of Angus, Fife, Stermond, and Ernedale, as it were lieng vnderneath him. This castell then being founded on the top of that high hill, put the realme to great charges before it was finished, for all the stuffe necessarie to the building, could not be brought vp without much toile and businesse. But Makbeth being once determined to haue the worke go forward, caused the thanes of each shire within the realme, to come and helpe towards that building, each man his course about<sup>7</sup>.’

<sup>1</sup> mere accident.

<sup>2</sup> premeditated.

<sup>3</sup> plotted.

<sup>4</sup> fear for.

<sup>5</sup> scarcely.

<sup>6</sup> trumped up pretence, frivolous charge.

<sup>7</sup> each in turn.

**“How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
At our great bidding?”**

14. ‘At the least, when the turne fell vnto Makduffe thane of Fife to builde his part, he sent workemen with all needfull prouision<sup>1</sup>, and commanded them to shew such diligence in euerie behalfe<sup>2</sup>, that no occasion might bee giuen for the king to find fault with him, in that he came not himselfe as other had doone, which he refused to doo, for doubt least the king bearing him (as he partlie vnderstood) no great good will, would laie violent handes vpon him, as he had doone vpon diuerse other. Shortly after, Makbeth comming to behold how the worke went forward, and bicause he found not Makduffe there, he was sore offended, and said: “I perceiue this man will neuer obeie my commandements, till he be ridden with a snaffle: but I shall prouide well inough for him.”’

**“Beware the thane of Fife.”**

15. ‘Neither could he afterwards abide to looke vpon the said Makduffe, either for that<sup>3</sup> he thought his puissance ouer great; either<sup>4</sup> else for that he had learned of certeine wizzards, in whose words he put great confidence (for that the prophesie had happened so right, which the three faries or weird sisters had declared vnto him) how that he ought to *take heed of Makduffe*, who in time to come should seeke to destroie him.’

**“Sweet bodements! good!”**

16. ‘And suerlie herevpon had he put Makduffe to death, but that a certeine witch, whome hee had in great trust, had told that he should *neuer be slaine with man borne of anie woman, nor vanquished till the wood of Bernane came to the castell of Dunsinane*. By this prophesie Makbeth put all feare out of his heart, supposing he might doo what he would, without anie feare to be punished for the same, for by the one prophesie he beleued it was vnpossible for anie man to vanquish him, and by the other vnpossible to slea him. This vaine hope caused him to doo manie outragious things, to the greuous oppression of his subiects.’

**“Macduff is fled to England.”**

17. ‘At length Makduffe, to auoid perill of life, purposed with himselfe to passe into England, to procure Malcolme Cammore to

<sup>1</sup> materials.

<sup>2</sup> respect.

<sup>3</sup> because.

<sup>4</sup> or.

claime the crowne of Scotland. But this was not so secretlie deuised by Makduffe, but that Makbeth had knowledge giuen him thereof: for kings (as is said) haue sharpe sight like vnto Lynx, and long ears like vnto Midas. For Makbeth *had in euerie noble mans house* one slie fellow or other *in fee* with him<sup>1</sup>, to reueale all that was said or doone within the same, by which slight he oppressed the most part of the nobles of his realme.

‘Immediatlie then, being aduertised<sup>2</sup> whereabouts Makduffe went, he came hastily with a great power into Fife, and foorthwith besieged the castell where Makduffe dwelled, trusting to haue found him therein. They that kept the house, without anie resistance opened the gates, and suffered him to enter, mistrusting<sup>3</sup> none euill. But neuerthelesse Makbeth most cruellie caused the wife and children of Makduffe, with all other whom he found in that castell, to be slaine. Also he confiscated the goods of Makduffe, proclaimed him traitor, and confined<sup>4</sup> him out of all the parts of his realme; but Makduffe was alreadie escaped out of danger, and gotten into England vnto Malcolme Cammore, to trie what purchase<sup>5</sup> hee might make by means of his support to reuenge the slaughter so cruellie executed on his wife, his children, and other friends.’

“Bleed, bleed, poor country!”

18. ‘At his comming vnto Malcolme, he declared into what great miserie the estate of Scotland was brought, by the detestable cruelties exercised by the tyrant Makbeth, hauing committed manie horrible slaughters and murders, both as well of the nobles as commons, for the which he was hated right mortallie of all his liege people, desiring nothing more than to be deliuered of that intollerable and most heauie yoke of thraldome, which they susteined at such a caitifes<sup>6</sup> hands.

‘Malcolme hearing Makduffes words, which he vttered in verie lamentable sort<sup>7</sup>, for meere<sup>8</sup> compassion and verie ruth<sup>9</sup> that pearsed his sorowfull hart, bewailing the miserable state of his countrie, he fetched a deepe sigh; which Makduffe perceiuing, began to fall most earnestlie in hand with him<sup>10</sup>, to enterprise<sup>11</sup> the deliuering of the Scottish people out of the hands of so cruell and bloudie a tyrant, as Makbeth by too manie plaine experiments did shew himselfe to be: which was an easie matter for him to bring to passe, considering not onelie the good title<sup>12</sup> he had,

<sup>1</sup> in his pay.      <sup>2</sup> informed of Macduff's intention.      <sup>3</sup> not suspecting any harm.      <sup>4</sup> banished.      <sup>5</sup> what he could do.      <sup>6</sup> wretch's.      <sup>7</sup> manner.      <sup>8</sup> absolute, very.      <sup>9</sup> pity.      <sup>10</sup> to urge him.      <sup>11</sup> to undertake.      <sup>12</sup> claim to the throne.

but also the earnest desire of the people to haue some occasion<sup>1</sup> ministred, whereby they might be reuenged of those notable iniuries, which they dailie susteined by the outrageous crueltie of Makbeths misgouernance. Though Malcolme was verie sorowfull for the oppression of his countriemen the Scots, in maner as Makduffe had declared; yet doubting whether he were come as one that ment vnfeinedlie as he spake, or else as sent from Makbeth to betraie him, he thought to haue some further triall, and therevpon dissembling his mind at the first, he answered as followeth:

**“Boundless intemperance.”**

19. “I am trulie verie sorie for the miserie chanced to my countrie of Scotland, but though I haue neuer so great affection to relieue the same, yet by reason of certeine incurable *vices*, which reigne in me, I am nothing meet thereto. First, such immoderate lust and voluptuous sensualitie (the abhominable founteine of all vices) followeth me, that if I were made king of Scots...mine *intemperancie* should be more importable<sup>2</sup> vnto you than the bloudie tyrannie of Makbeth now is.” Heereunto Makduffe answered: “this surely is a verie euill fault, for *manie* noble princes and *kings* haue lost both liues and kingdomes for the same; neuerthelesse follow my counsell, Make thy selfe king.”

**“A stanchless avarice.”**

20. ‘Then said Malcome, “I am also the most *auaritious* creature on the earth, so that *if I were king*, I should seeke so manie waies to get *lands* and goods, that I would slea the most part of all *the nobles* of Scotland by surmised<sup>3</sup> accusations, to the end I might inioy their lands, goods, and possessions. Therefore, saith Malcolme, suffer me to remaine where I am, least<sup>4</sup> if I atteine to the regiment<sup>5</sup> of your realme, mine inquenchangeable auarice may prooue such, that ye would thinke the displeasures which now grieue you, should seeme easie in respect of the vnmeasurable outrage, which might insue through my comming amongst you.”

‘Makduffe to this made answer, how “*auarice* is the *root* of all mischiefe, and for that crime the most part *of our kings* haue bene *slaine* and brought to their finall end. Yet notwithstanding follow my counsell, and take vpon thee the crowne, There is gold and riches inough in Scotland to satisfie thy greedie desire.”’

<sup>1</sup> opportunity.

<sup>2</sup> unbearable.

<sup>3</sup> imaginary, false.

<sup>4</sup> lest.

<sup>5</sup> rule.

## No "king-becoming graces."

21. 'Then said Malcolme againe, "I am furthermore inclined to dissimulation, telling of leasings<sup>1</sup>, and all other kinds of deceit, so that I naturallie reioise in nothing so much, as to betraie & deceiue such as put anie trust or confidence in my woords. Then sith there is nothing that more *becommeth a prince than constancie, veritie, truth, and iustice*, with the other laudable fellowship of those faire and noble vertues which are comprehended onelie in soothfastnesse<sup>2</sup>, and that lieng vtterlie ouerthroweth the same; you see how *vnable* I am to *gouerne* anie prouince or region: and therefore sith you haue remedies to cloke and hide all the rest of my other vices, I praiue you find shift to cloke this vice amongst the residue."

'Then said Makduffe: "This yet is the woorst of all, and there I leaue thee, and therefore saie; *Oh ye vnhappy and miserable Scottish-men*, which are thus scourged with so manie and sundrie calamities, ech one aboue other! Ye haue one cursed and wicked tyrant that now reigneth ouer you, *without* anie right or *title*, oppressing you with his most *bloudie* crueltie. This other that hath the right to the crowne, is so replet with the inconstant<sup>3</sup> behaiour and manifest vices of Englishmen, that he is nothing woorthie to inioy it: for by his owne confession he is not onelie auaritious, and giuen to vnsatiabie lust, but so false a traitor withall, that no trust is to be had vnto anie woord he speaketh. *Adieu Scotland*, for now I account my selfe a *banished* man for euer, without comfort or consolation:" and with those woords the brackish teares trickled downe his cheekes verie abundantlie.'

## "Now we'll together."

22. 'At the last, when he was readie to depart, Malcolme tooke him by the sleeue, and said: "Be of good comfort Makduffe, for I haue none of these vices before remembred<sup>4</sup>, but haue iested with thee in this manner, onelie to prouue<sup>5</sup> thy mind: for diuerse times heeretofore hath Makbeth sought by this manner of meanes to bring me into his hands, but the more slow I haue shewed my selfe to condescend<sup>6</sup> to thy motion and request, the more diligence shall I vse in accomplishing the same." Incontinentlie<sup>7</sup> heereupon they imbraced ech other, and promising to be faithfull the one to the other, they fell in consultation how they might best prouide for all their businesse, to bring the same to good effect. Soone after, Makduffe repairing to the borders of Scotland, addressed

<sup>1</sup> falsehoods.    <sup>2</sup> truthfulness.    <sup>3</sup> unreliable.    <sup>4</sup> mentioned.    <sup>5</sup> test.

<sup>6</sup> agree to thy proposal.    <sup>7</sup> immediately.

his letters with secret dispatch vnto the nobles of the realme, declaring how Malcolme was confederat with him, to come hastilie into Scotland to claime the crowne, and therefore he required<sup>1</sup> them, sith he was right inheritor thereto, to assist him with their powers to recouer the same out of the hands of the wrongfull vsurper.<sup>2</sup>

“Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men.”

23. ‘In the meane time, Malcolme purchased<sup>2</sup> such fauor at king Edwards hands, that *old Siward earle* of Northumberland, was appointed *with ten thousand men* to go with him into Scotland, to support him in this enterprise, for recouerie of his right. After these newes were spread abroad in Scotland, the nobles drew into two seuerall factions, the one taking part with Makbeth, and the other with Malcolme. Heereupon insued oftentimes sundrie bickerings, & diuerse light skirmishes: for those that were of Malcolmes side, would not ieopard<sup>3</sup> to ioine with their enimies in a pight<sup>4</sup> field, till his comming out of England to their support.’

“Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane  
I cannot taint with fear.”

24. ‘But after that Makbeth perceiued his enimies power to increase, by such aid as came to them foorth of England with his aduersarie Malcolme, he recoiled backe into Fife, there purposing to abide in campe *fortified*, at the *castell of Dunsinane*, and to fight with his enimies, if they ment to pursue him; howbeit some of his friends aduised him, that it should be best for him, either to make some agreement with Malcolme, or else to flee with all speed into the Iles, and to take his treasure with him, to the end he might wage<sup>5</sup> sundrie great princes of the realme to take his part, & reteine<sup>6</sup> strangers, in whome he might better trust than in his owne subiects, which stale<sup>7</sup> dailie from him: but he had such confidence in his prophesies<sup>8</sup>, that he beleued he should *neuer be vanquished, till Birnane wood were brought to Dunsinane; nor yet to be slaine with anie man, that should be or was borne of anie woman.*’

“Let every soldier hew him down a bough.”

25. ‘Malcolme following hastilie after Makbeth, came the night before the battell vnto Birnam wood, and when his armie had rested a

<sup>1</sup> requested.    <sup>2</sup> gained.    <sup>3</sup> risk joining.    <sup>4</sup> pitched battle.    <sup>5</sup> prevail on.  
<sup>6</sup> take into his service as *retainers*.    <sup>7</sup> stole.    <sup>8</sup> the prophesies he had heard.

while there to refresh them, he *commanded every man to get a bough of some tree or other of that wood in his hand, as big as he might beare,* and to march foorth therewith in such wise, that on the next morrow they might come closelie and without sight in this manner within viewe of his enimies. On the morrow when Makbeth beheld them comming in this sort, he first maruelled what the matter ment, but in the end remembred himselfe that the prophesie which he had heard long before that time, of *the comming of Birnane wood to Dunsinane castell,* was likelie to be now fulfilled.'

"I bear a charmed life, which must not yield  
To one of woman born."

26. 'Neuerthelesse, he brought his men in order of battell, and exhorted them to doo valiantlie, howbeit his enimies had scarsely cast from them their boughs, when Makbeth perceiuing their numbers, betooke him streict to flight, whom Makduffe pursued with great hatred euen till he came vnto Lunfannaine, where Makbeth perceiuing that Makduffe was hard at his backe, leapt beside his horsse, saiong: "Thou traitor, what meaneth it that thou shouldest thus in vaine follow me that am not appointed to be slaine by anie creature that is *borne of a woman,* come on therefore, and receiue thy reward which thou hast deserued for thy paines," and therewithall he lifted vp his sword thinking to haue slaine him.

'But Makduffe quicklie auoiding<sup>1</sup> from his horsse, yer<sup>2</sup> he came at him, answered (with his naked sword in his hand) saiong: "It is true Makbeth, and now shall thine insatiable crueltie haue an end, for I am euen he that thy wizzards haue told thee of, who was neuer borne of my mother, but *ripped out of her wombe*": therewithall he stept vnto him, and slue him in the place. Then cutting his head from his shoulders, he set it vpon a pole, and brought it vnto Malcolme.

'This was the end of Makbeth, after he had reigned 17 yeeres ouer the Scottishmen. In the beginning of his reigne he accomplished manie woorthie acts, verie profitable to the common-wealth, (as ye haue heard) but afterward by illusion<sup>3</sup> of the diuell, he defamed the same with most terrible crueltie. He was slaine in the yeere of the incarnation 1057, and in the 16 yeere of king Edwards reigne ouer the Englishmen.'

<sup>1</sup> jumping from.

<sup>2</sup> before.

<sup>3</sup> being deceived by.

“So, thanks to all at once and to each one,  
Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.”

27. ‘Malcolme Cammore thus recouering the relme (as ye haue heard) by support of king Edward, in the 16 yeere of the same Edwards reigne, he was *crowned at Scone* the 25 day of Aprill, in the yeere of our Lord 1057. Immediatlie after his coronation he called a parlement at Forfair, in the which he rewarded them with lands and liuings that had assisted him against Makbeth, aduancing them to fees and offices as he saw cause, & commanded that specialie those that bare the surname of anie offices or lands, should haue and inioy the same. He created manie earles, lords, barons, and knights. Manie of them that before were *thanes*, were at this time made *earles*, as Fife, Menteth, Atholl, Leuenox, Murrey, Cathnes, Rosse, and Angus. These were *the first earles* that haue beene heard of *amongst the Scottishmen*, (as their histories doo make mention.)’

“Macbeth does murder sleep.”

28. Furness notes that the germ of this passage (II. 2. 35—43) may be due to Holinshed. He says: “there is one other incident recorded by Holinshed, on one of the few intermediate pages of his Chronicle, between the stories of King Duff and Macbeth, which I cannot but think attracted Shakespeare’s notice as he passed from one story to the other, and which was afterward worked up by him in connection with Duncan’s murder. As far as I am aware, it has never been noted by any editor or commentator. It seems that Kenneth, the brother, and one of the successors of Duff, was a virtuous and able prince, and would have left an unstained name had not the ambition to have his son succeed him tempted him to poison secretly his nephew Malcome, the son of Duff and the heir apparent to the throne. Kenneth then obtained from a council at Scone the ratification of his son as his successor. ‘Thus might he seeme happie to all men,’ continues Holinshed (p. 158), ‘but yet to himselfe he seemed most vnhappy as he that could not but still live in continuall feare, least his wicked practise concerning the death of Malcome Duffe should come to light and knowledge of the world....And (as the fame goeth) it chanced that a voice was heard as he was in bed in the night time to take his rest, vttering vnto him these or the like words in effect [denouncing speedy vengeance on his crime]....The king with this voice being striken into great dread and terror, passed that night without anie sleepe comming in his eies.’”



## APPENDIX.

## A.

I. FORMAN'S ACCOUNT OF *MACBETH*.

The following is Dr Simon Forman's account<sup>1</sup> of the performance of *Macbeth* at which he was present on April 20, 1610:

"In *Macbeth*, at the Globe, 1610, the 20th of April, Saturday, there was to be observed, first how Macbeth and Banquo, two noblemen of Scotland, riding through a wood, there stood before them three women Fairies, or Nymphs, and saluted Macbeth, saying three times unto him, Hail, Macbeth, King of Codor, for thou shalt be a King, but shalt beget no Kings, &c. Then, said Banquo, What all to Macbeth and nothing to me? Yes, said the Nymphs, Hail to thee, Banquo; thou shalt beget Kings yet be no King. And so they departed, and came to the Court of Scotland to Duncan King of Scots, and it was in the days of Edward the Confessor. And Duncan bad them both kindly welcome, and made Macbeth forthwith Prince of Northumberland; and sent him home to his own Castle, and appointed Macbeth to provide for him, for he would sup with him the next day at night, and did so.

"And Macbeth contrived to kill Duncan, and through the persuasion of his wife did that night murder the King, in his own Castle, being his guest. And there were many prodigies seen that night and the day before. And when Macbeth had murdered the King, the blood on his hands could not be washed off by any means, nor from his wife's hands,

<sup>1</sup> It occurs in a MS. Diary entitled *The Booke of Plaies and Notes thereof*. The writer, Simon Forman, was a well-known physician and astrologer, contemporary with Shakespeare. He died in 1611. The extract, with Collier's comments, is printed here as given by Furness, pp. 383—385.

which handled the bloody daggers in hiding them, by which means they became both much amazed and affronted.

“The murder being known, Duncans two sons fled, the one to England, the [other to] Wales, to save themselves: they being fled, were supposed guilty of the murder of their father, which was nothing so.

“Then was Macbeth crowned King, and then he for fear of Banquo, his old companion, that he should beget kings but be no king himself, he contrived the death of Banquo, and caused him to be murdered on the way that he rode. The night, being at supper with his noblemen whom he had bid to a feast, (to the which also Banquo should have come,) he began to speak of noble Banquo, and to wish that he were there. And as he thus did, standing up to drink a carouse to him, the ghost of Banquo came and sat down in his chair behind him. And he, turning about to sit down again, saw the ghost of Banquo, which fronted him, so that he fell in a great passion of fear and fury, uttering many words about his murder, by which, when they heard that Banquo was murdered, they suspected Macbeth.

“Then Macduff fled to England to the King’s son, and so they raised an army and came into Scotland, and at Dunston Anyse overthrew Macbeth. In the mean time, while Macduff was in England, Macbeth slew Macduff’s wife and children, and after in the battle Macduff slew Macbeth.

“Observe, also, how Macbeth’s Queen did rise in the night in her sleep and walk, and talked and confessed all, and the Doctor noted her words.”

Collier says:

“Besides mis-spelling some of the names, as Mackbet, Mackdove, Dunston Anyse, &c., Forman’s memory seems to have failed him upon particular points: thus he makes the ‘Fairies or Nymphs’ (*vice* Witches), hail Macbeth as ‘*King of Codor,*’ instead of *Thane* of Cawdor, and old Duncan subsequently creates him ‘*Prince of Northumberland.*’ After the murder, Forman states that neither Macbeth nor his wife could wash the blood from their hands, by reason of which they were both ‘amazed and affronted.’ If this were a mob-accordant incident in the play in 1610, it was among the omissions made by the player-editors when it was published in 1623.”

## II. HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE PLAY.

Dr Furness says:

“Such<sup>1</sup> are the sources from which Shakespeare drew the materials of the tragedy of ‘Macbeth,’ and, of course, for his purpose it mattered little whether it were founded on fact or were the baseless fabric of a dream. Yet, as the editors here and there, during the progress of the tragedy, call attention to various points where historic truth is said to be violated, it may be worth while as briefly as possible to compare the fiction with the fact. What follows is condensed from CHALMERS’S *Caledonia*, bk iii, ch. vii.

“The rebellion of Macdonwald, from the Western Isles, is mere fable. The old historians may have confounded it either with the rebellion of Gilcomgain, the maormor of Moray, in 1033, or with the rebellious conduct of Torfin, Duncan’s cousin. Nor was there during the reign of Duncan any invasion of Fife by Sweno, Norway’s king. It was to put down the rebellion of Torfin that Duncan marched northward through the territorial government of Macbeth, and was slain by treasonous malice at Bothgowanan, near Elgin, and many miles from Inverness, in A.D. 1039. Macbeth’s father was not Sinel, but Finley<sup>2</sup>, or Finlegh, the maormor, or prince, of Ross, not the thane of Glamis, and was killed about the year 1020, in some encounter with Malcolm II, the grandfather of Duncan. Thus by lineage Macbeth was thane of Ross, and afterwards by marriage the thane of Moray. This same grandfather of Duncan, Malcolm II, also dethroned and moreover slew Lady Macbeth’s grandfather; *on both sides of the house, therefore, there was a death to be avenged on the person of Duncan. But of the two, Lady Macbeth’s wrongs were far heavier than her husband’s, and might well fill her from crown to toe topfull of direst cruelty*<sup>3</sup>. Her name was Lady Gruoch and her first husband was Gilcomgain, the maormor of Moray, a prince of the highest rank and next to the royal family; upon him Malcolm’s cruelty fastened, and he was burnt within his castle with fifty of his clan, and his young wife escaped by flight with her infant son Lulach. She naturally sought refuge in the neighbouring county

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the passages from Holinshed’s *Chronicles* which he has quoted and of which we have given the most important.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Hume Brown, whose authority is unsurpassed, writes the name *Finnlacc*.

<sup>3</sup> The italics are ours. Cf. Dr Brandes: “There was a blood-feud between the house of Duncan and the house of Macbeth... Both had the [motive] to a blood-revenge on Duncan.”

of Ross, then governed by Macbeth, and him she married. About a year after the death of her first husband, Lady Gruoch's only brother was slain by the command of that same aged Malcolm II, whose peaceful death soon after, unprecipitated by poison, flame, or sword, is not one of the least incredible traditions of that misty time.

"In 1054 the Northumbrians, led by Siward and his son Osbert, penetrated probably to Dunsinnan, and in that vicinity Macbeth met them in a furious battle; but Bellona's bridegroom was defeated, and fled to the North. It was not till two<sup>1</sup> years afterwards, on the 5th of December, 1056, that he was slain by Macduff.

"History knows nothing of Banquo, the thane of Lochaber, nor of Fleance. None of the ancient chronicles, nor Irish annals, nor even Fordun, recognize these fictitious names. Neither is a thane of Lochaber known in Scottish history, because the Scottish kings never had any demesnes within that inaccessible district.

"Of the fate of Lady Macbeth, apart from the lines of Shakespeare, history, tradition, and fable are silent."

These remarks may be supplemented with advantage by Professor Hume Brown's account<sup>2</sup> of Macbeth's attainment of the crown, and of the character of his reign:

"Macbeth, son of Finnlac, was mormaer of Moray, and chief leader of the royal forces, and to the authority which these high offices gave him, he added a claim which made him a dangerous subject of the unhappy Duncan. His wife Gruoch was the grand-daughter of Kenneth III and, in default of another representative, had a claim on the throne by the old law of alternate succession. The claim was a sufficiently slight one; but the men of Moray had all along been jealous of the southern royal house, and Macbeth could count on their faithful support. Apparently the broken fortunes of Duncan brought to Macbeth the opportunity he sought; for, under circumstances imperfectly known, he slew him (1040) at Bothgouanan<sup>3</sup> near Elgin, and at once took possession of the kingdom which he was to hold for seventeen years.

"From the comparative length of Macbeth's reign and from what little we know of it, we may infer that he ruled at once with vigour and

<sup>1</sup> The Article in the *Dictionary of Biography* gives the date as 15 Aug. 1057. See also the extract from Professor Hume Brown's *History*.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Scotland* (Cambridge Historical Series), vol. 1. pp. 53—55.

<sup>3</sup> Said to mean "the smith's bothy or hut."

acceptance. The first attempt to unseat him was made by Crinan, abbot of Dunkeld, the father of the late king; but in a decisive battle Crinan was slain with 'nine times twenty heroes,' and not till his last year was Macbeth again troubled by internal tumult. The eleventh century was marked by an outburst of pious feeling which was confined to no class or nation of Christendom. The year 1000 had come and gone, and the anticipated end of all things seemed to have been indefinitely postponed. Coincident with this unexpected respite, kings and other great persons gave proof of their devotion by lavish gifts to the church. In Scotland, we shall see, a succession of princes were so profuse in their bounty that in the end it proved a snare to the institution it was meant to benefit. Usurper as he might be called, Macbeth showed either his policy or his piety in his generosity to the church. In 1050 he distributed sums of money among the poor of Rome, and he may even himself have made a pilgrimage for the purpose. At home, also, we have at least two instances of his liberality. In the name of himself and his wife Gruoch the lands of Kyrkness were granted to the Culdees of Lochleven; and to the same body he himself made a gift of the lands of Bolgyne 'with the deepest veneration and devotion.' By the general character of his rule, indeed, Macbeth appears to have gained the support of all parts of his kingdom. In 1054 the strength and solidity of his dominion was put to a test which it could not otherwise have stood. In that year Siward, Earl of Northumbria, possibly in the interest of Malcolm, the son of Duncan, invaded Scotland by land and sea, with a force meant to carry all before it. A general rising against the usurper could not have failed to effect his ruin, but no such defection took place. Macbeth met the enemy in the open field and, though he appears to have been worsted, Siward himself was so crippled that he led back his force without accomplishing any definite object. Three years later Macbeth had to encounter Malcolm himself, now old enough to make good his own claims. Of the details of the contest no word has come down to us. In the year 1057, however, Macbeth was slain by his enemy—probably in open fight at Lumphanan in Aberdeenshire. Such are the facts that may be regarded as authentic concerning the historical Macbeth. Of the defamatory legend that supplied the materials of the poet the explanation is at once simple and satisfactory. With the Scottish historians who followed the War of Independence it was a prime concern to produce an unbroken line of Scottish kings stretching to the fathers of the human race. As an interloper in this series Macbeth was

a monster, whose origin and whose actions must alike have been contrary to nature. In the hands of Wyntoun, therefore, improved by Hector Boece, Macbeth was transmuted into the diabolic personage whom Holinshed presented to the genius of Shakspeare."

### III. THE SUPERNATURAL IN *MACBETH* AND ELIZABETHAN SUPERSTITION.

Dr Brandes has some admirable comments on the dramatic effect of the supernatural element in *Macbeth*—more particularly in its relation to the beliefs of Shakespeare's own time.

Speaking of resemblances between *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* he says :

"Yet another parallel shows the kinship between the Danish and the Scottish tragedy. It is in these dramas alone that the dead leave their graves and reappear on the scene of life ; in them alone a breath from the spirit-world reaches the atmosphere of the living. There is no trace of the supernatural either in *Othello* or in *King Lear*.

"No more here than in *Hamlet* are we to understand by the introduction of supernatural elements that an independently-working superhuman power actively interferes in human life ; these elements are transparent symbols. Nevertheless the supernatural beings that make their appearance are not to be taken as mere illusions ; they are distinctly conceived as having a real existence outside the sphere of hallucination. As in *Hamlet*, the Ghost is not seen by the prince alone, so in *Macbeth* it is not only Macbeth himself who sees the Witches ; they even appear with their queen, Hecate, when there is no one to see them except the spectators of the play.

"It must not be forgotten that this whole spirit- and witch-world meant something quite different to Shakespeare's contemporaries from what it means to us. We cannot even be absolutely certain that Shakespeare himself did not believe in the possible existence of such beings. Great poets have seldom been consistent in their incredulity—even Holberg believed that he had seen a ghost. But Shakespeare's own attitude of mind matters less than that of the public for whom he wrote.

"In the beginning of the seventeenth century the English people still believed in a great variety of evil spirits, who disturbed the order of nature, produced storms by land and sea, foreboded calamities and death, disseminated plague and famine. They were for the most part pictured as old, wrinkled women, who brewed all kinds of frightful enormities in hellish cauldrons ; and when such beldams were thought to have been detected, the law took vengeance on them with fire and sword. In a sermon preached in 1588, Bishop Jewel appealed to Elizabeth to take strong measures against wizards and witches. Some

years later, one Mrs Dyer was accused of witchcraft for no other reason than that toothache had for some nights prevented the Queen from sleeping. In the small town of St Osees in Essex alone, seventy or eighty witches were burnt. In a book called 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft,' published in 1584, Reginald Scott refuted the doctrine of sorcery and magic with wonderful clearness and liberal-mindedness; but his voice was lost in the chorus of the superstitious. King James himself was one of the most prominent champions of superstition. He was present in person at the trial by torture of two hundred witches who were burnt for occasioning the storm which prevented his bride's crossing to Scotland. Many of them confessed to having ridden through the air on broomsticks or invisible chariots drawn by snails, and admitted that they were able to make themselves invisible—an art of which they, strangely enough, did not avail themselves to escape the law. In 1597 James himself produced in his *Dæmonologie* a kind of handbook or textbook of witchcraft in all its developments, and in 1598 he caused no fewer than 600 old women to be burnt. In the Parliament of 1604 a bill against sorcery was brought in by the Government and passed.

"Shakespeare produced wonderful effects in *Hamlet* by drawing on this faith in spirits; the apparition on the castle platform is sublime in its way, though the speech of the Ghost is far too long. Now, in *Macbeth*, with the Witches' meeting, he strikes the keynote of the drama at the very outset, as surely as with a tuning-fork; and wherever the Witches reappear the same note recurs. But still more admirable, both psychologically and scenically, is the scene in which Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost sitting in his own seat at the banquet-table.... The grandeur, depth, and extraordinary dramatic and theatrical effect of this passage [III. 4. 44—51] are almost unequalled in the history of the drama.

"The same may be said of well-nigh the whole outline of this tragedy—from a dramatic and theatrical point of view it is beyond all praise. The Witches on the heath, the scene before the murder of Duncan, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth—so potent is the effect of these and other episodes that they are burnt for ever on the spectator's memory."

The results produced by the introduction of the supernatural in *Macbeth* may be grouped under three headings—plot, character-interest, atmosphere. (1) The supernatural is part of the mechanism of the plot because the influence of the Witches affects Macbeth's actions so much. (2) It serves in III. 4 as a measure of the working of his feelings. (3) It invests the whole theme with mystery and diffuses an atmosphere of awe, through which the tragedy looms more terrible. I think we might venture to compare it with part of *Ephesians* vi. 12.

IV. DRAMATIC<sup>1</sup> IRONY.

One of the most effective of dramatic devices is the use of "irony." The essential idea of "irony" is double dealing, as when some speech has a double meaning—the obvious one which all perceive, and the cryptic which only certain of the hearers understand. And "irony" of fate or circumstances is a sort of double dealing by which Destiny substitutes for what we might expect just the opposite, the unexpected, thing. This "irony" of the broader kind informs Macbeth's later relations (IV. 1) with the Witches, in that through them revelations are made from which he anticipates certain results, whereas it happens that precisely the opposite results accrue to him.

But understood in the more limited sense in which "irony" is used as a dramatic term, it may be said, roughly, to lie in the difference between the facts as known to the audience and as imagined by the characters of the play or by some of them. *Macbeth* is remarkable beyond any other of Shakespeare's plays for the frequency and power of its tragic "irony." Numerous instances, which it were needless to recapitulate, have been mentioned in the Notes, and the reader will have observed others. "The entire atmosphere of *Macbeth*" (it has been well said), "as of no other tragedy, is oppressive with the sense of something subtly malignant as well as inexorably revengeful in the forces that rule the world; of a tragic irony in the ultimate scheme of things."

But leaving *Macbeth* we will illustrate Shakespearian "irony" from two or three of the most familiar plays. Thus in *Henry V.* II. 2. 12—69 the situation is pregnant with "irony" because the audience know (6, 7) that the conspiracy has been revealed to Henry, while the conspirators imagine that it is still a secret. Hence for the audience Henry's bearing, and many of his remarks, have a significance which is quite lost upon the conspirators themselves, who on their part are unconscious that their hollow protestations of loyalty are being estimated at their true value. The incident of the pardon (39—60) is introduced—we

<sup>1</sup> The term "tragic irony" does not cover the full scope of this literary artifice, which, as we shall see, is equally used in the romantic drama for comic purposes, and equally effective as in the classical tragic drama. Gk *εἰρωνεία*, 'dissembling' (Lat. *dissimulatio*). Literally *εἶπων* = 'one who speaks,' but the word came to mean specifically one who speaks after a particular manner, namely, as a dissembler who says less than he knows or thinks and affects ignorance, e.g. in argument—like Socrates. See Mr Moulton's sections on "irony."



may remember that it has no parallel in Holinshed's account—entirely for the sake of the "irony:" The conspirators urge Henry to be stern, and the audience know how their pleading will recoil upon themselves (79—83). This is "irony" of situation. It often takes the form of attributing to a character a bold, self-confident tone just when he is, as the audience know, on the brink of some catastrophe, as the conspirators are. Thus in *Richard II.* the king, in spite of his reverses, gives vent (III. 2. 54—62) to triumphant confidence in his cause just when he is about to know what the audience know already, and feel that he must shortly know, viz. that the Welsh army on which his hope rests (cf. 76, 77) has dispersed. For similar "irony" of situation cf. *Julius Cæsar*, III. 1, where Cæsar is made to use the most exalted language about himself when we know that he is on the very edge of destruction.

Often the "irony" is verbal, the dramatist putting into the mouth of a character remarks which the audience, with their fuller knowledge of the facts, can interpret in two ways, while the speaker himself (or his fellow-characters) is quite unconscious of any secondary point in his words. In a tragedy this verbal irony, which is specially associated with the Sophoclean drama, frequently takes the form of "innocent phrases covering sinister depths of meaning." In comedy it is effectively provocative of mirth. Thus in *Twelfth Night* the humour and interest of the scenes in which Viola is with Olivia and Orsino turn largely upon the fact that they do not know her to be a girl, while the audience do. Shakespeare purposely makes Olivia and Orsino say things which have for the audience a point whereof the speaker is quite unconscious. In the same way many of Viola's remarks (cf. III. 1. 169—172) contain veiled allusions to her sex which the audience perceive at once, whereas Olivia or Orsino sees no allusion at all.

The same effect is gained in *As You Like It* through the same cause, viz. Rosalind's disguise. No more perfect specimen of verbal "irony" could be instanced than the dialogue at the end of the scene (IV. 3) where Rosalind, disguised as a youth, faints at the sight of the blood-stained handkerchief and Oliver lightly chides the "youth" for being so womanly:

*Oliver.* Be of good cheer, youth: *you a man! you lack a man's heart.*

*Rosalind.* *I do so. I confess it.* Ah, sirrah, a body would think this was well counterfeited! I pray you, tell your brother how well I counterfeited. Heigh-ho!

*Oliver.* This was not counterfeit: there is too great testimony in your complexion, that it was a passion of earnest.

*Rosalind.* Counterfeit, I assure you.

*Oliver.* Well then, take a good heart, and *counterfeit to be a man.*

*Rosalind.* *So I do: but, i' faith, I should have been a woman by right."*

Often, of course, "irony" of situation and of remark are united. Greek tragedy is full of "irony," especially verbal "irony." Indeed, it compensated to some extent for the lack of freshness in the themes treated. The chief themes of Greek tragedy were drawn from those great cycles of Hellenic myth and story which were common property, so that the audience knew from the outset what would be the course and issue of a play<sup>1</sup>. Verbal "irony," therefore, was made a partial substitute for the absence of the element of surprise and novelty. This is especially the case in the dramas of Sophocles<sup>2</sup>. It is one of the classical features of the most perfect piece of classicism in the English language—Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. As in Greek tragedy a character will let fall some seemingly casual remark which exactly describes (as the audience see) the doom that awaits him, so Samson foreshadows his own and his enemies' end literally when he says (1265—1267):

"Yet so it may fall out, because their end  
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine  
*Draw their own ruin* who attempt the deed."

For the words *draw* and *ruin* (Lat. *ruina*, 'falling') literally describe the catastrophe which the audience know to be approaching (i.e. the fall of the roof). And other illustrations from *Samson Agonistes* might be given.

## V. DRAMATIC RELIEF.

Editors quote<sup>3</sup> De Quincey's characteristic enquiry into the principle of dramatic relief exemplified by the Porter's speech (II. 3). The effect of the speech, he says, is to "reflect back upon the murder a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity": the cause of the effect he analyses thus:

"All action in any direction is best expounded, measured and made apprehensible, by reaction. Now apply this to the case of Macbeth.

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare dramatising history was to some extent in the same position as Æschylus or Sophocles dramatising well-known legends.

<sup>2</sup> The *locus classicus* on "The Irony of Sophocles" is Bishop Thirlwall's essay, originally printed in the *Philological Museum* (Cambridge, 1833), vol. II. pp. 483—537.

<sup>3</sup> Furness, pp. 437, 438.

Here, as I have said<sup>1</sup>, the retiring of the human heart, and the entrance of the fiendish heart, was to be expressed and made sensible. Another world has stepped in, and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires. They are transfigured: Lady Macbeth is 'unsexed'; Macbeth has forgot that he was born of woman; both are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how shall this be conveyed and made palpable? In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers, and the murder, must be insulated, —cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs,—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested,—laid asleep,—tranced,—racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is, that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.

“O mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers,—like frost and snow, rain and dew, hail-storm and thunder, which are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too-much or too-little, nothing useless or inert,—but that, the further we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident!”

<sup>1</sup> Referring to an earlier sentence: “In *Macbeth*...we were to be made to feel that the human nature, i.e., the divine nature of love and mercy, spread through the hearts of all creatures, and seldom utterly withdrawn from man,—was gone, vanished, extinct; and that the fiendish nature had taken its place.”

## B.

## 1. "If it were done" etc.

*Macbeth*, I. 7. 1, 2.

The punctuation followed in our text is that generally adopted by modern editors. It is substantially that of the Folio, except that the latter has a needless comma after *well*.

The suggestion has been made that we should place a full stop at the end of line 1, remove the colon in line 2, connect *It were done quickly* with what follows, and interpret to this effect :

'If it were done [=done with, ended] when it is done [=executed], then it were well [=a good deed to do]. It were done [=ended] quickly if the murder could arrest the evil consequences' etc.

This method of taking the passage involves a considerable change of punctuation, and seems to me to yield at once an inferior sense and rhythm. In particular it loses the piece of self-revelation so characteristic of Macbeth, that for him hesitation is fatal and suspense a torture: that to act at all he must act ere his resolution cools. Note how often we get this thought in the play, e.g. in his own words (II. 1. 61, III. 4. 139, 140, IV. 1. 146—148); how, as a matter of fact, he does suddenly brace himself to the deed (II. 1. 60—64), just as he murders the grooms on a sudden impulse (II. 3).

Again, though the two senses of *done* are clear enough in line 1, yet I do not think that *done* could have any other than its ordinary sense in a familiar phrase like *done quickly*.

I see therefore no more reason for this alteration of the passage than for another suggested change just after, viz. that we should invert the order of *surcease* and *success*.

## II. "Heaven's Cherubin."

*Macbeth*, I. 7. 22.

According to a mediæval belief the Heavenly beings were divided into three Hierarchies, and each Hierarchy was subdivided into three Orders or Choirs. These Orders comprised the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones (*θρόνοι*), forming the first Hierarchy; Dominations (*κυριό-*

τητες), Virtues (*δυνάμεις*), and Powers (*ἐξουσίαι*), forming the second; Principalities (*ἀρχαί*), Archangels and Angels, forming the third. This system was deduced, in the main, from St Paul's words in *Ephes.* i. 21 and *Coloss.* i. 16. First formulated in the treatise *περὶ τῆς οὐρανίας ἱεραρχίας*, which was long attributed, though falsely, to Dionysius, the Areopagite, the notion had great influence in the Middle Ages; cf. Dante, *Paradiso*, XXVIII. 98—126. Allusions to it are frequent in Elizabethan writers. Works from which many illustrations of the system might be quoted are: *Batman vppon Bartholome* (1582), Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), Thomas Watson's *Eglogue* (1590), the *Faust-book* (1592), Spenser's *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie* (1596), Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, I. 28, and Heywood's *Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels* (1635), which deals with the subject at great length.

Milton accepted<sup>1</sup> the tradition and made it the basis of the whole angelical system of *Paradise Lost*.

Each of the Orders possessed some special quality. The Seraphim were the "burning" lustrous beings; cf. Spenser, *Heavenly Beautie*:

"those eternall burning Seraphins,  
Which from their faces dart out fierie light."

This conception, due probably to the false derivation of *Seraphim* from a root signifying 'to burn,' determines Milton's choice of epithets for this Order of the Hierarchies—e.g. "fiery" (*Par. Lost*, II. 512), "bright" (*Par. Lost*, III. 381), "burning" (*At a Solemn Musick*). Really *Seraphim* is from a root 'to exalt,' and means 'the exalted ones.'

The Cherubim had a wondrous power of vision: hence their main duty in *Paradise Lost* is to keep watch: they are essentially the sentinels of the poem. See IV. 778, XI. 128. And through this power of vision they enjoyed in a peculiar degree the *Visio Beatifica*, or faculty of "contemplating" the Deity. In the words of the treatise *περὶ τῆς ἱεραρχίας* they were distinguished *διὰ τὸ θεοπτικὸν αὐτῶν καὶ θεωρητικόν*. And this notion is the key to that line (54) in *Il Penseroso*, the point of which has been so much misunderstood—"The Cherub Contemplation."

<sup>1</sup> Thus in *Church Government* he says, "the angels themselves...are distinguished into their celestial principedoms and satrapies," *P. W.* II. 442. He several times uses the special terms "Orders" and "Hierarchies"—cf. *P. L.* I. 737, V. 587, 591, VII. 192; while the titles "Seraphim," "Thrones," "Dominations," "Virtues" etc. occur constantly.

It has been suggested that Shakespeare was familiar with this tradition and glanced at it here (*Macbeth*, I. 7. 22, 23) and in three other places. For it is certainly implied here that the Cherubim are in a special degree sharp of vision, since they are made to direct "the *sightless* couriers of the air." Cf. again *Hamlet*, IV. 3. 49, 50, where the king declares that his "purposes" towards Hamlet are "good," and the latter replies, "I see a cherub that sees them"—meaning that he has his suspicions and sees through the king's pretence of friendliness. Cf. also *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 2. 74, 75: "Fears make devils of cherubins; they never *see* truly"; and note the striking epithet applied to the Cherubim in *The Merchant of Venice*, V. 1. 62, viz. "young-eyed"; I have not the slightest doubt that the sense intended is 'with sight ever young, i.e. keen, undimmed,' and that Shakespeare was alluding to this mediæval belief in the peculiar vision of the Cherubim. The whole idea, of course, derives from Ezekiel's description of the Cherubim as being "full of eyes round about them" (*Ezekiel* i. 18, x. 12). We must remember that these traditions about the Heavenly Orders were quite familiar to people in Shakespeare's time.

### III. "An Equivocator."

*Macbeth*, II. 3. 8.

This passage (II. 3. 8—11) is generally recognised as a "direct reference to the doctrine of *equivocation* avowed by Henry Garnet, Superior of the order of Jesuits in England, on his trial for the Gunpowder *Treason*, on the 28th of March, 1606, and to his *perjury* on that occasion, or, as Shakespeare expresses, 'to his swearing in both the scales against either scale.'...The trial, at which King James himself was present incognito, doubtless attracted very general notice"; and the reference here must have been perceived at once by Shakespeare's audience. Malone (the writer just quoted) shows that *equivocation* was a striking feature of the defence. Thus a contemporary letter describes how Garnet "fell into a large discourse defending *equivocation*." The official record of the case proves that one of the judges "desired him *not to equivocate*," and that Garnet, being convicted of inconsistency in his evidence, "cried the lords mercy, and said he had offended, if *equivocation* did not help him." (F.)

Moreover, among the papers of another of the conspirators, Francis

Tresham (the betrayer of the plot), was a *Treatise on Equivocation* with corrections by Garnet. It has been noted that many of the places connected with the Gunpowder Plot were in the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon, so that the matter must have had a peculiar interest for Shakespeare.

Attempts have been made by Garnet's co-religionists to upset Malone's theory, but judging it solely as a literary matter I do not think that any impartial student can doubt its correctness. Further, I believe Malone was right in regarding the words *who committed treason enough for God's sake* as an allusion to the motives which Garnet alleged to have moved him to take part in the Gunpowder *Treason*. And it is worth noting that the *alias* under which Garnet often passed was "*Mr Farmer*," as many of Shakespeare's audience would know; so that the transition (for the two must not be identified) from the "*farmer* that hanged himself" to the *equivocator* (Garnet) was a sort of jest.

Of the principle of "equivocation" Dr Gardiner says:

"According to this doctrine, the immorality of a lie did not consist in the deception practised upon the person who was deceived, but in the difference between the words uttered and the intended meaning of the speaker. If, therefore, the speaker could put any sense, however extravagant, upon the words of which he made use, he might lawfully deceive the hearer, without taking any account of the fact that he would be certain to attach some other and more probable meaning to the words."... The "popular feeling" against this doctrine "found a voice in the words of the Porter in 'Macbeth'"—*History of England, 1603—1642*; I. pp. 280—282.

#### IV. The Songs<sup>1</sup> in *The Witch*.

*Macbeth*, III. 5, IV. 1.

The song "Come away, come away," referred to in *Macbeth*, III. 5, occurs in the following passage of Middleton's play, where Hecate is summoned to join the company of witches who have already soared aloft.

"*Firestone*. Hark, hark, mother! they are above the steeple already, flying over your head with a noise of musicians.

<sup>1</sup> Furness, pp. 401, 402, 404.

*Hecate.* They're they indeed. Help, help me ; I'm too late else.

*Song above.*

Come away, come away,  
Hecate, Hecate, come away !

*Hec.* I come, I come, I come, I come,  
With all the speed I may,  
With all the speed I may.

Where's Stadlin ?

[*Voice above.*] Here.

*Hec.* Where's Puckle ?

[*Voice above.*] Here ;

And Hoppo too, and Hellwain too ;  
We lack but you, we lack but you ;  
Come away, make up the count.

*Hec.* I will but 'noint, and then I mount.

[*A Spirit like a cat descends.*]

[*Voice above.*] There's one comes down to fetch his dues,  
A kiss, a coll, a sip of blood ;  
And why thou stay'st so long

I muse, I muse,

Since the air's so sweet and good.

*Hec.* O, art thou come ?

What news, what news ?

*Spirit.* All goes still to our delight :

Either come, or else

Refuse, refuse.

*Hec.* Now I'm furnish'd for the flight.

*Fire.* Hark, hark, the cat sings a brave treble in her own language !

*Hec.* [*going up*] Now I go, now I fly,  
Malkin my sweet spirit and I" etc.

And this is the song "Black Spirits" etc. (see *Macbeth*, IV. 1) sung in *The Witch* while the witches are brewing a noxious potion in their vessel :

"*Hec.* Stir, stir about, whilst I begin the charm.

Black<sup>1</sup> spirits and white, red spirits and gray,  
Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may !

<sup>1</sup> References to the colours of spirits are common in old writers on witchcraft like Reginald Scot. Thus in the *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (Nicholson's ed. p. 453) we have a stanza (taken from some old ballad or popular tale) on which the first line of



Titty, Tiffin,  
 Keep it stiff in;  
 Firedrake, Puckey,  
 Make it lucky;  
 Liard, Robin,  
 You must bob in.

Round, around, around, about, about!  
 All ill come running in, all good keep out!"

V. "The Healing Benediction."

*Macbeth*, IV. 3. 135—154.

The following account is from Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1900), p. 707:

"King's Evil; Scrofula; so called from a notion which prevailed from the reign of Edward the Confessor to that of Queen Anne that it could be cured by the royal touch. The Jacobites considered that the power did not descend to William III. and Anne because the 'divine' hereditary right was not fully possessed by them, but the office [i.e. form of prayer for the ceremony] remained in our Prayer-Book till 1719. Prince Charles Edward, when he claimed to be Prince of Wales, touched a female child for the disease in 1745; but the last person touched in England was Dr Johnson, in 1712, when only thirty months old, by Queen Anne. The French kings laid claim to the same divine power even from the time of Anne of Clovis, A.D. 481, and on Easter Sunday, 1686, Louis XIV. touched 1600 persons, using these words: '*Le roy te touche, Dieu te guerisse.*' The practice was introduced by Henry VII. of presenting the person 'touched' with a small gold or silver coin, called a touch-piece. The one presented to Dr Johnson has St George and the Dragon on one side and a ship on the other; the legend of the former is *Soli deo gloria*, and of the latter *Anna D: G. M. BR. F. ET H. Reg.* (= Anne, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland Queen). We are told that

the song quoted above ("Black spirits") is obviously a mere variation. So Milton alludes to a "blue meagre hag" in *Comus*, 431. "White" was traditionally the colour of an innocuous spirit, who had natural powers and used them for good purposes. Cf. the *Spectator*, 131: "the character which I go under in part of the neighbourhood is what they here call a white witch."

Charles II. touched 92,107 persons. The smallest number in one year was 2,983, in 1669; and the largest number was in 1684, when many were trampled to death. (See Macaulay's *History of England*, chap. xiv.) John Brown, a royal surgeon, had to superintend the ceremony."

Camden in his *Remains*, published in 1605, a book thought to have been familiar to Shakespeare, refers to "touching" as a "gift hereditary" of the English sovereigns and says that it had "lately" become a subject of learned discussion (Fleay, *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 239; Ward, *English Dramatic Literature*).

To understand the full significance of Shakespeare's allusion to James I.'s "touching" we must understand certain contemporary circumstances. Dr Gardiner says:

"When he first arrived in England James had objected to touch for the king's evil. He had strong doubts as to the existence of the power to cure scrofulous disease, which was supposed to be derived from the Confessor. The Scotch ministers whom he had brought with him to England urged him to abandon the practice as superstitious. To his English counsellors it was a debasing of royalty to abandon the practice of his predecessors. With no very good will he consented to do as Elizabeth had done, but he first made a public declaration of his fear lest he should incur the blame of superstition. Yet as it was an ancient usage, and for the benefit of his subjects, he would try what would be the result, but only by way of prayer, in which he requested all to join<sup>1</sup>. In after years he showed less hesitancy, and Shakespeare could flatter him by telling not only how Edward had cured the sick by his touch, but how he had left 'the healing benediction' to 'the succeeding royalty'"—*History of England*, 1603—1642; I. p. 152.

The real point, therefore, the true inwardness, of Shakespeare's complimentary reference is that it gave expression to the gratitude of James's English subjects for the concession he had made to English feeling, despite the opposition of his Scotch advisers. And no doubt Shakespeare's audience were not slow to show that he had interpreted their sentiments aright.

<sup>1</sup> The sentence represents the substance of his declaration on the subject, made in September 1603.

## VI. "He has no children."

*Macbeth*, IV. 3. 211.

"'He' is probably Malcolm, whose talk of comfort at such a moment is thus rebutted and explained. Macbeth lies wholly beyond the pale of such reproach"—*Herford*. This seems to me the right interpretation. Some editors, however, refer the words to Macbeth, with one of two possible meanings: (1) "either that Macduff could not, by retaliation, revenge the murder of his children because Macbeth had none himself; or (2) that if he had any, a father's feelings...would have prevented him from the deed." But as to (1), it seems too soon for Macduff to think of "revenge," in spite of Malcolm's words: for the moment he is lost in dazed grief; and as to (2), one doubts whether Macduff would even credit Macbeth, the detested tyrant, with so much grace as would have kept him, if a father of living children, from the crime; in fact (2) makes the words almost a palliation of Macbeth's action. Still, the case as between Malcolm and Macbeth is nicely balanced, and curiously enough, the two strikingly parallel passages quoted by editors leave the point in precisely the same state of uncertainty. Thus in 3 *Henry VI.* v. 5, Queen Margaret, in her agony over Prince Edward, turns upon his slayers (61—64):

"Butchers and villains! bloody cannibals!

How sweet a plant have you untimely cropp'd!

*You have no children*, butchers! if you had,

The thought of them would have stirr'd up remorse" (=pity).

Against this set *King John*, III. 4. 91, where Constance, after Arthur has been taken from her, refuses all comforts and counsel, and when Pandulph rebukes her for over-indulgence in grief, retorts: "He talks to me *that never had a son*" (and so, like Malcolm here, cannot know what a parent's feelings are). On the whole, then, I think that Malcolm is meant. It is not improbable, indeed, that when he wrote this part of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare had in his thoughts that scene (III. 4) in *King John*. It is in his works *the* great expression of parental grief; far more elaborate, at any rate, than the present, though not more poignant than the man's less abandoned agony. And it is worth noting that the line quoted above occurs just a little before the famous "Life is as tedious" etc. which Shakespeare obviously remembered when he wrote

*Macbeth*, v. 5. 26—28. Indirectly this point makes in favour of the Malcolm-identification (= "He").

This line raises another point: *Has Macbeth children alive?* 'No' is the impression, surely, that one derives from the play (e.g. from I. 7. 54, 55, III. 1. 63, 64). The very notion of children of such parents as Macbeth and his wife being alive,—of their being, for instance, in one part of the castle while Macbeth was doing his murderous deed in another,—is utterly repulsive. Moreover, it increases the wanton horror of Macbeth's crime against Duncan that he should have been prompted by sheer ambition for himself and wife alone (I. 7. 25—28), nor is it of the least consequence that there was, apparently, a vague tradition that a son of Macbeth named Lulach fell with his father in the last battle (v. 8), or a little later.

### VII. "This Great Stage."

*Macbeth*, v. 5. 24, 25.

Shakespeare is fond of the comparison seen in *Macbeth*, II. 4. 5, 6 ("man's...stage") and v. 5. 24, 25 ("Life's but a...poor player"). It would appeal to him in his double capacity as dramatist and actor. The great illustration, of course, is Jaques's speech in *As You Like It*, II. 7. 138—142:

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages."

In *The Merchant of Venice*, I. 1. 77—79, Antonio says:

"I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;  
A stage where every man must play a part,  
And mine a sad one."

Cf. again Lear's words (IV. 6. 186, 187):

"When we are born, we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools";

and *Sonnet 15*:

"When I consider everything that grows  
Holds in perfection but a little moment,  
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows  
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment."

The idea is not peculiar to Shakespeare. It is one of those world-wide immemorial thoughts which occur independently to many minds. The Greek epigram expressed it in four words: *σκηνη πας ο βλος*. Other Elizabethan writers had used it. Malone quotes from *The Legend of Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1597:

“ Unhappy Man!  
Whose life's a sad continuous tragedie,  
Himself the actor, in the world the stage,  
While as the acts are measured by his age.”

The thought is worked out in two very striking poems, one attributed to Raleigh, in Bullen's *Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-Books*, pp. 152, 153, 196. One of the many Shakespearian parallels in *The Duchess of Malfi* is the Duchess's saying (IV. 1):

“ I account this world a tedious theatre,  
For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will.”

In connection with Shakespeare the comparison has this special interest, that the motto placed over the entrance to the Globe Theatre on the Bankside (the theatre with which Shakespeare was associated from the time of its erection in 1599 till his final retirement to Stratford) was “*Totus mundus agit histrionem*” (‘every one's a player’).

We may reasonably suppose that the motto was in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote the passage in *As You Like It*.

The antiquary Oldys, who lived in the last century, collected some curious old stories and traditions about Shakespeare, such as the tradition that he played the part of Adam in *As You Like It*; and amongst his notes are certain “Verses of Ben Jonson and Shakespeare, occasioned by the motto to the Globe Theatre—*Totus mundus agit histrionem*.” These are the verses:

“*Jonson*. If, but *stage actors*, all the world displays,  
Where shall we find *spectators* of their plays?  
*Shakespeare*. Little, or much, of what we see, we do;  
We are all both *actors* and *spectators* too.”

<sup>1</sup> The source of the quotation has been found in the fragments of Petronius Arbiter, a writer of the Silver Age of Latinity (died A.D. 66). His words are “*non duco contentionis funem dum constet inter nos, quod fere totus mundus exerceat histrionem*” (or *histrioniam*, according to another reading).

Mr Gollancz adds an interesting illustration from a book said to have been well known to the Elizabethan age, viz. "Boissard's *Theatrum Vitae Humanae* (published at Metz, 1596), the opening chapter of which is embellished with a remarkable emblem representing a huge pageant of universal misery, headed with the lines :

' *Vita Humana est tanquam  
Theatrum omnium miseriarum* ' ;

beneath the picture are words to the same effect :

' *Vita hominis tanquam circus vel grande theatrum.* ' "

## HINTS ON METRE.

### I. Regular Type of Blank Verse.

Blank verse<sup>1</sup> consists of unrhymed lines, each of which, if constructed according to the regular type, contains five feet, each foot being composed of two syllables and having a strong stress or accent on the second syllable, so that each line has five stresses, falling respectively on the even syllables, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Here is an example from *Macbeth* (I. 3. 38):

“So foúl | and fair | a dáy | I háve | not seén.”

The rhythm of a line like this is a “rising” rhythm.

Blank verse prior to Marlowe, the great Elizabethan dramatist whose work influenced Shakespeare, was modelled strictly on this type. Further, this early blank verse was what is termed “end-stopt:” that is to say, there was almost always *some* pause, however slight, in the sense, and consequently in the rhythm, at the close of each line; while the couplet was normally the limit of the sense. As an example of this “end-stopt,” strictly regular verse, take the following extract from the first play written in blank verse, viz. the tragedy called *Gorboduc* (1561):

<sup>1</sup> The metre is sometimes called “iambic pentameter verse,” but this and other terms of Greek prosody, with its symbols, should be avoided, since classical metres, Greek and Latin, are based on a different principle from English prosody. The basis of classical metre is the “quantity” of syllables, and this is represented by the symbols – (long syllable) and ~ (short). The basis of English metre is stress or accent (i.e. the stress laid by the voice on a syllable in pronouncing it); and stress should be represented by the symbols ’ (strong stress) and ` (weak).

“Why should I live and linger forth my time,  
 In longer life to double my distress?  
 O me most woeful wight! whom no mishap  
 Long ere this day could have bereaved hence:  
 Mought not these hands by fortune or by fate  
 Have pierced this breast, and life with iron reft?”

If the whole of *Macbeth* were written in verse of this kind the effect, obviously, would be intolerably monotonous. Blank verse before Marlowe *was* intolerably monotonous, and in an especial degree unsuited to the drama, which with its varying situations and moods needs a varied medium of expression more than any other kind of poetry. Marlowe's great service to metre, carried further by Shakespeare, was to introduce variations into the existing type of the blank decasyllabic measure. In fact, analysis of the blank verse of any writer really resolves itself into a study of his modifications of the “end-stopt” regular type.

## II. Shakespeare's Variations of the Regular Type.

The chief variations found in Shakespeare (some of them often combined in the same line) are these:

1. *Weak stresses.* As we read a passage of blank verse our ear tells us that the stresses or accents are not always<sup>1</sup> of the same weight in all the five feet of each line. Thus in the line

“Of nó|ble háv|ing ànd | of rói|al hópe” (I. 3. 56)

we feel at once that the stress in the 3rd foot is not equal to that which comes in the other feet. A light stress like this is commonly called a “weak stress.” Two weak stresses may occur in the same line, but rarely come together. The foot in which a weak stress is least frequent is the first. It is perhaps with prepositions that a weak stress, in any foot, occurs most often. Here are lines with weak stresses:

“Upòn | the síght|less cou|riers òf | the áir” (I. 7. 23).

“Put rán|cours ìn | the vé|sel òf | my peáce,

Ónly | for thém, | and míne | etér|nal jéw(el)

Gív'n to | the cóm|mon én|emy | of mán” (III. I. 67—69).

<sup>1</sup> Dr Abbott estimates that rather less than one line of three has the full number of five strong stresses, and that about two lines out of three have four strong stresses.



“Whóle as | the már|ble, fóund|ed às | the rók,  
As broád | and gén|’ral às | the cá|sing air” (III. 4. 22, 23).

“Whát, sir, | not yét | at rést? | The kíng’s | a-béd:  
He háth | been in | unú|sual pleá|sure, ànd  
Sent fórh | great lár|gess tò | your óf|ficès” (II. 1. 12—14).

It may not be amiss to remind the young student that in reading a passage of Shakespeare aloud he should be careful to give the weak stresses as weak, i.e. not lay the same emphasis indiscriminately on all the stressed syllables.

2. *Inverted stresses*<sup>1</sup>. The strong stress may fall on the first of the two syllables that form a foot—as the student will have observed in several of the lines quoted above. The following extracts also contain examples:

“Vául|ting | ambí|tion, which | o’er|leáps | itself” (I. 7. 27).

“If goód, | whý do | I yí|eld | to thát | suggés|(tion)?” (I. 3. 134).

“And yét | dark ní|ght | strá|ngles | the trá|v’|lling lámp” (II. 4. 7).

“Súch I | accó|unt | thy ló|ve. | Árt thou | afeá|rd?” (I. 7. 39).

“Cú|rses, | not loú|d | but deép, | móú|th-hon|our, breá|th” (V. 3. 27).

“How nó|w, | my ló|rd! | whý do | you keép | aló|ne?” (III. 2. 8).

“I há|ve | begú|n | to plá|nt | thee, ànd | will lá|(bour)  
To má|ke | thee fú|ll | of gró|w(ing). | Nó|ble | Bán|quo” (I. 4. 28, 29).

Inversion of the stress is most frequent after a pause: hence the foot in which it occurs most often is the first (i.e. after the pause at the end of the preceding line). There may be two inversions in one line, as some of the examples show; but they are seldom consecutive. This shifting of the stress generally *emphasises* a word. It also varies the regular “rising rhythm” of the normal blank verse by a “falling rhythm.”

3. *Extra syllables*. Instead of ten syllables a line may contain eleven or even twelve. An extra syllable, unstressed, may occur at any point in the line, and usually comes before a pause: hence it is commonest in the last foot (the end of a line being the commonest place

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mr Robert Bridges’s work, *Milton’s Prosody*, pp. 19—21, where Milton’s use of inversions is fully analysed and illustrated in a way that helps the study of Shakespeare’s inversions.

for a pause), and frequent about the middle of a line (where there is often a break in the sense or rhythm). Compare

“To-mór|row, ànd | to-mór|row, ànd | to-mór(row)” (v. 5. 19).

“Glámis | thou árt, | and Cáu|dor; ànd | shalt bé  
What thou | art próm(is'd): | yét do | I feár | thy ná(ture)”  
(I. 5. 13, 14).

“He’s nó|ble, wíse, | judí|cious, ànd | best knóws  
The fits | o’ the seá(son). | I dáre | not speák | much fír(ther):  
But crú|el áre | the tímes, | when wé | are trai(tors),  
And dó | not knów | oursél(ves); | when wé | hold rú(mour)”  
(IV. 2. 16—19).

An extra syllable, unstressed<sup>1</sup>, at the end of a line, as in the first and last of these examples, is variously called a “double ending” and a “feminine ending.” The use of the “double ending” becomes increasingly frequent as Shakespeare’s blank verse grows more complex. “Double endings” increase<sup>2</sup> from 4 per cent. in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* to 33 in *The Tempest*, middle plays such as *Henry V.* having a percentage of about 18. The percentage of “double endings” is therefore one of the chief of the metrical tests which help us to fix the date of a play. In fact the use of “double endings” is the commonest of Shakespeare’s variations of the normal blank verse. The extra syllable at the end of a line not only gives variety by breaking the regular movement of the ten-syllabled lines, but also, where there is no pause after it, carries on the sense and rhythm to the next line.

Sometimes two extra syllables occur at the end—less commonly, in the middle—of a line. Compare

“My thought, | whose múr|der yét | is bút | fantás(tical)”  
(I. 3. 139).

“And táke | my mílk | for gáll, | you múr|d’ring mín(isters)”  
(I. 5. 46).

“Put ón | their ín(struments). | Receíve | what cheér | you máy”  
(IV. 3. 234).

<sup>1</sup> An extra syllable that bears or would naturally bear a stress is rare in Shakespeare. The use of such syllables at the end of a line is a feature of Fletcher’s verse, and the frequent occurrence of them in *Henry VIII.* is one of the metrical arguments that he wrote a good deal of that play. Milton has one or two instances in *Comus*; cf. 633, “Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this (soil).”

<sup>2</sup> The metrical statistics in these “Hints” are taken from various sources.

“That név|er máy | ill óf|fice, òr | fell jeál(ousy)”  
(*Henry V.* v. 2. 391).

“Toók it | too eá(gerly): | his sól|diers féll | to spoíl”  
(*Julius Cæsar*, v. 3. 7).

This licence is specially frequent with proper names; compare

“My Lórd | of Wést|morelánd, | and ún|cle Éx(eter)”  
(*Henry V.* II. 2. 70).

“My deár | Lord Glós|ter, ànd | my goód | Lord Éx(eter)”  
(*Henry V.* IV. 3. 9).

The number of lines with two extra syllables increases much in the later plays of Shakespeare. Generally one of the extra syllables admits of some degree of slurring.

4. *Unstopt (or Run-on) verse.* The blank verse of Shakespeare's early plays shows clearly the influence of the rhymed couplet which he had used so much in his very earliest work. In his early blank verse the rhyme indeed is gone, but the couplet form remains, with its frequent pause of sense, and consequently of rhythm, at the end of the first line, and its still more frequent stop at the end of the second. Lines of this type mark only the first step in the evolution of blank verse: freedom in the expression of sense and varied rhythm are still absent; and freedom and variety come only when the sense “runs on” from one line to another.

If at the end of a line there is any pause in the sense, however slight—such a pause for instance as is marked with a comma—the line is termed “end-stopt.” If there is no pause in the sense at the end of the line it is termed “unstopt” or “run-on.” There is a progressive increase of “unstopt” verse in the plays. The proportion of “unstopt” to “end-stopt” lines is in *Love's Labour's Lost* only 1 in 18 (approximately); in *The Winter's Tale* it is about 1 in 2. The amount, therefore, of “unstopt” verse in a play is another of the metrical tests by which the period of its composition may, to some extent, be inferred.

The rhythm of a line depends greatly on the sense: where there is any pause in the sense there must be a pause in the rhythm. The great merit of “unstopt” blank verse is that the sense by overflowing<sup>1</sup> into the

<sup>1</sup> The overflow is helped by the use of “light” and “weak” endings to a line. “Light endings” are monosyllables on which “the voice can to a small extent dwell”: such as the parts of the auxiliary verbs, *be, have, will, shall, can, do*; pronouns like *I, we, thou, you, he, she, they, who, which*, etc.; and conjunctions such as *when*,

next line tends to carry the rhythm with it, and thus the pauses in the rhythm or time of the verse, instead of coming always at the end, come in other parts of the line.

5. *A syllable slurred.* "Provided there be only one accented syllable, there may be more than two syllables in any foot. 'It is he' is as much a foot as 'tis he'; 'we will serve' as 'we'll serve'; 'it is over' as 'tis o'er.'

"Naturally it is among pronouns and the auxiliary verbs [*and prepositions*] that we must look for unemphatic syllables in the Shakespearian verse. Sometimes the unemphatic nature of the syllable is indicated by a contraction in the spelling. Often, however, syllables may be dropped or slurred in sound, although they are expressed to the sight" (Abbott).

This principle that two unstressed syllables may go in the same foot with one stressed syllable is very important because feet so composed have a rapid, trisyllable effect which tends much to vary the normal line. Examples are :

"As cánnons | o'erchár|g'd | with dou|ble crácks; | so théy"  
(I. 2. 37).

"That loók | not líke | th' inháb|itánts | o' the eá|rth" (I. 3. 41).

"To crówn | my thóughts | with ácts, | be it (=be't) thóught | and  
dóne" (IV. I. 149).

"To the lást | sýlla|ble óf | recór|ded tíme" (V. 5. 21).

This licence is specially characteristic of the later plays. Compare

"Bút that | the séa, | móunting | to the<sup>1</sup> wél|kin's cheék"  
(*The Tempest*, I. 2. 4).

"And hére | was léft | by the sail|ors. Thóú, | my sláve"  
(*The Tempest*, I. 2. 270).

*where, while.* "Weak endings" are those monosyllables over which the voice passes with practically no stress at all—e.g. the prepositions *at, by, for, from, in, of, on, to, with*; also *and, but, if, nor, or, than, that*: all words which go very closely with what follows and therefore link the end of one line with the beginning of the next. The use of these endings belongs to the later plays. "Light endings" are first numerous (21) in *Macbeth* (1606), and "weak endings" (28) in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1608). Some of the early plays have neither "light endings" nor "weak." Some have a very few "light endings." Of "weak endings" no play has more than two up till *Antony and Cleopatra*. The proportion of these endings—"light" and "weak"—is therefore another of the metrical tests applied to the later plays (Ingram).

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes in such cases the Folio prints *th'*, showing that the word was meant to be slurred (Abbott).

“Him that | you térm’d, sir, | ‘The goód | old lórd, | Gonzá|lo”  
(*The Tempest*, v. i. 15).

“I’ the lást | night’s stórm | I súch | a féllow sáw”  
(*King Lear*, iv. i. 34).

6. *Omissions.* After a pause or interruption there is sometimes an omission (*a*) of an unstressed syllable (oftenest in the first foot), or (*b*) of a stress, or (*c*) even of a whole foot.

“It is obvious” (says Abbott) “that a syllable or foot may be supplied by a gesture, as beckoning, a movement of the head to listen, or of the hand to demand attention”: or the blank may be accounted for by an interruption, such as the entrance of another character, or by a marked pause or break in the sense. Compare

(*a*) “Whó | comes hére? | The wór|thy tháne | of Róss” (i. 2. 45).

“Má|ny yeárs | of háp|py dáys | befál” (*Richard II.* i. 1. 20).

“Thén | the whí|ning schoól|boy with | his sát|chel”

(*As You Like It*, ii. 7. 145).

(*b*) “And fálls | on th’ óth|er. [*Enter Lady M.*] | How nów! | what néws?” (i. 7. 28).

“Flátter|ers! [*Turns to Brutus*] | Now, Brú|tus, thánk | yoursélf”  
(*Julius Cæsar*, v. i. 45).

“Messá|la! [*Messala turns and salutes*] | Whát says | my gén|erál?”  
(*Julius Cæsar*, v. i. 70).

(*c*) “He’s tá|en. | [*Shout*] | And, hárk! | they shoút | for jóy”  
(*Julius Cæsar*, v. 3. 32).

7. *Lines of irregular length.* Shakespeare uses lines of three feet often; less frequently, lines of two feet, especially to break the course of some passionate speech; lines of four feet; half-lines occasionally; brief questions, answers and exclamations, which metrically need not count; and rarely lines with six strong stresses, i.e. Alexandrines<sup>1</sup> (the sonorous type of verse which ends each stanza in *The Faerie Queene*).

As a rule, the use of a short line corresponds with something in the sense, e.g. a break (as at the end of a speech), agitation, conversational

<sup>1</sup> So called either from Alexandre Paris, an old French poet, or from the *Roman d’Alexandre*, a 12th century poem about Alexander the Great, written in rhymed lines of six feet, in couplets. It is the metre of French tragedy (e.g. of the tragedies of Racine and Corneille).

effect of question and answer, strong emphasis. Thus "the irregular lines in the excited narrative of the battle (I. 2. 20, 41, 51) are perhaps explained by the haste and excitement of the speaker"; while in I. 5. 59 we feel that Lady Macbeth "pauses to watch the effect of her words" (Abbott). At the close of a speech a short line gives perhaps greater emphasis, and certainly variety.

There are not a few lines which look somewhat like Alexandrines ("apparent Alexandrines," as Abbott calls them) but which on examination are found not to have six unmistakable stresses. Thus in each of the following seemingly long lines of *Macbeth* one syllable or more can be slurred or elided or treated as extra-metrical.

- (a) "Of thè | impé|riál thême. | I thánk | you, gén(tl'men)<sup>1</sup>"  
(I. 3. 129).
- (b) "But théy | did sáy | their práy|ers, ànd | addréss'd (them)"  
(II. 2. 25).
- (c) "In ouír | last cón(frence), | páss'd in | probá|tion wi' you,  
Hów you | were bórne | in hánd, | how cróss'd, | the ín(stru-  
ments)" (III. 1. 80, 81).
- (d) "I'll cóme | t' you anón. | We áre | resól|v'd, my lórd"  
(III. 1. 139).
- (e) "With thém | they thínk | on? Things | withóut | all  
ré(medy)" (III. 2. 11).

An unstressed vowel like the middle *e* in *remedy* or *enemy* (III. 1. 105) may be slurred.

- (f) "Meéting | were báre | withóut (it). |  
Sweét re|mémbran(cer)!" (III. 4. 37).
- (g) "Is góne | to práy | the hó|ly kíng, | upon his (=on's) áid"  
(III. 6. 30).

Here *upon* = 'on, like *against* = 'gainst; so we find *into* and *unto* = 'to.

- (h) "And àn | etér|nal cúrse | fáll on you ! | Let me knów"  
(IV. 1. 105).

<sup>1</sup> In this and similar cases the symbol ' is intended to show that a vowel is ignored in the scansion, though heard more or less in pronunciation. There is no means of marking the different degrees of slurring: thus, *confrence* represents with fair accuracy the pronunciation which must be given in line (c), whereas *ren'dy* in line (e) or *en'my* (III. 1. 105) would over-emphasise the slurring sound required there.

(i) "Be like | our wárrant|ed quár(rel)! | Why are | you sí(lent)?"  
(IV. 3. 132).

An unstressed vowel is often lost in a preceding *r* sound; so we find *barren* = a monosyllable (*barr'n*).

(j) "All mór|tal cónse|quences háve | pronóunc'd | me thús"  
(V. 3. 5).

The *s* of the plural and possessive cases of nouns of which the singular ends in *s*, *se*, *ss*, *ce* and *ge* is often not sounded, being absorbed into the preceding *s* sound (Abbott). Cf. II. 4. 14.

(k) "The núm|bers òf | our hóst | and máke | discó(v'ry)"  
(V. 4. 6).

Again, some seemingly six-foot lines are really "trimeter couplets:" that is, "couplets of two verses of three accents each...often thus printed as two separate short verses in the Folio....Shakespeare seems to have used this metre mostly for rapid dialogue and retort, and in comic and the lighter kind of serious poetry" (Abbott). Generally some notion of division is suggested. Examples of these couplets in *Macbeth* are: I. 3. 65; II. 2. 30 (where each half has an extra syllable); and IV. 1. 89 (divided between two speakers, as is often the case with the trimeter couplet).

These, then, are the chief modes by which Shakespeare diversifies the structure of regular blank verse. Their general result has been well summed up thus:

they make the effect of Shakespeare's maturer blank verse rather rhythmical than rigidly metrical:

i.e. more a matter of stresses distributed with endless variety than of syllables calculated and accented according to a normal standard. Every student should grasp these variations thoroughly, particularly the first five, and observe the illustrations of them that occur in any play (especially the later plays) that he may be studying.

And he must, of course, remember that scansion depends much on the way in which a writer abbreviates or lengthens sounds, as the metre requires.

Abbreviation comprises all the cases in which a syllable does not count metrically—whether it be elided<sup>1</sup>, contracted, or slurred<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the common elision of *the* before a vowel, e.g. in I. 5. 42, "Stóp up | *th'* access...," and 45, "*Th'* effect | and it"; I. 7. 10, "To plágue | *th'* invén|tor...," and II, "Comménds | *th'* ingréd|ients...."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the footnote on p. 272.

Many abbreviations belong to everyday speech, others to poetical usage.

Of lengthening of sounds the most important example is the scansion of a monosyllable as two syllables<sup>1</sup>.

For full details the student must refer to the standard authority, viz. Dr Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar*, pp. 344—387.

### III. Shakespeare's use of Rhyme.

In his early plays Shakespeare uses the rhymed couplet<sup>2</sup> very largely; but gradually the amount of rhyme declines, so that the proportion of rhymed couplets in a piece is one of the surest indications of the period to which it belongs.

Is there much rhyme? the play is early.

Is there little rhyme? the play is late.

"In *Love's Labour's Lost* there are about two rhymed lines to every one of blank verse. In *The Comedy of Errors* there are 380 rhymed lines to 1150 unrhymed. In *The Tempest* two rhymed lines occur; in *The Winter's Tale* not one" (Dowden).

In applying the rhyme test we must exclude the cases where there is a special reason for the use of rhyme—as in the Witches-scenes of *Macbeth*. Thus the rhyme of the Masque in Act IV. of *The Tempest* has no bearing whatsoever on the date of the play, because Masques were usually written in rhymed measures. Similarly all songs such as we get in *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale* must, of course, be excluded.

Let us consider for a moment the reasons which led Shakespeare to adopt blank verse and gradually abandon rhyme.

As a medium of dramatic expression blank verse, of the varied Shakespearian type, has these points of superiority over rhyme:

<sup>1</sup> Abbott gives the following instances in *Macbeth*: *hail* (i. 2. 5); *feel* (i. 5. 55); *wrought* (ii. 1. 19); *sleep* (ii. 1. 51); *here* (ii. 3. 104); *worst* (iii. 1. 103); *cold* (iv. 1. 6); *fire* (iv. 1. 21); *sight* (iv. 1. 122); *fare* (iv. 3. 106); and *weird* in several places. A following pause in some of these cases helps the prolongation of the vowel-sounds.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. of five feet in each line; cf. i. 5. 67—70.



1. *Naturalness.* Rhyme is artificial. It reminds us, therefore,—perhaps I should say, never lets us forget—that the play *is* a play, fiction and not reality, because in real life people do not converse in rhyme. Especially in moments of great emotion does rhyme destroy the illusion of reality: we cannot conceive of Lear raving at Goneril in rhymed couplets. Blank verse on the other hand has something of the naturalness of conversation, and naturalness is a very great help towards making fiction appear like truth.

2. *Freedom.* The necessity of rhyming imposes restraint upon a writer such as blank verse obviously does not involve, and often forces him to invert the order of words or even to use a less suitable word. The rhythm too of the rhymed couplet tends strongly to confine the sense within the limits of the couplet, whereas in the blank verse of a skilful writer the sense “runs on” easily from line to line. In fact, in the rhymed couplet the verse is apt to dominate the sense; while in blank verse the sense finds unfettered expression. And so blank verse has not only something of the naturalness but also something of the freedom of conversation.

3. *Variety.* In a paragraph of rhymed couplets the pauses in the sense and therefore in the rhythm are monotonous. We constantly have a pause at the end of the first line and almost always a pause at the end of the second. With the uniformity of a passage composed in this form contrast the varied rhythms of such blank verse as that of *The Tempest*, where the pauses are distributed with ever-changing diversity of cadence.

Again, the rhyme of a long narrative poem when read, or of a short lyric when recited, has a pleasing effect; but in a long spell of spoken verse I think that the sound of rhyme, though at first agreeable to it, gradually tires the ear.

What rhyme we do get in Shakespeare's later plays is mainly at the end of a scene, when it serves to indicate the conclusion, and (less commonly) at the close of a long speech, when it forms a kind of climax. As to the former use (cf. 1. 7. 81, 82) Dr Abbott says: “Rhyme was often used as an effective termination at the end of the scene. When the scenery<sup>1</sup> was not changed, or the arrangements were

<sup>1</sup> There was no movable scenery; the only outward indication of the locality intended was some stage ‘property’—e.g. “a bed to signify a bed-chamber; a table with pens upon it to signify a counting-house; or a board bearing in large letters the name of the place”—*Dowden*.

so defective that the change was not easily perceptible, it was, perhaps, additionally desirable to mark that a scene was finished."

And just as rhyme often marks the close of a scene so it sometimes marks the close of a chapter in a man's career, and suggests farewell. A striking example of this use of rhyme occurs in *As You Like It*, II. 3. 67—76, where old Adam and Orlando, about to set forth on their expedition, severally bid farewell to their former life. Similarly in *Richard II.* II. 2. 142—149, the rhyme expresses the feeling of the King's favourites that their period of prosperity is over and they are parting for ever; while in v. 5. 109—119, it emphasises the tragedy of the close of Richard's life. Again, in *King Lear* (a comparatively late play, 1605—1606) the banished Kent is made to use rhyme in his leave-taking (I. 1. 183—190).

One other noticeable purpose of rhyme is found in plays as late as *Othello* (about 1604) and *Lear*, viz. to express moralising reflections on life and give them a sententious, epigrammatic effect. Dowden instances *Othello*, I. 3. 202—219, and II. 1. 149—161. This use of rhyme is natural because proverbial wisdom so often takes a rhymed form. Maxims stick better in the memory when they are rhymed.

#### IV. Shakespeare's use<sup>1</sup> of Prose.

The proportion of prose to verse, unrhymed and rhymed, in *Macbeth* is very small. That this should be so will not surprise us if we consider (a) the main purposes for which Shakespeare uses prose in his plays, (b) the peculiarly tragic character of the play.

The chief use to which Shakespeare puts prose is as a colloquial medium of expression. He introduces it where he wishes "to lower the dramatic pitch." A good illustration of this use is part of the talk between Lady Macduff and her little boy (IV. 2), where the prose gives a simple, domestic colouring which contrasts pathetically with the tragic

<sup>1</sup> Strictly, it does not come under the heading "metre"; but it is convenient to treat the subject here. See Abbott, p. 429.

surroundings. Another example—indeed, the only other instance in *Macbeth*—is the scene with the Doctor and the Gentlewoman (v. 1). The alternations of verse and prose in each scene are not arbitrary. It is, indeed, always instructive to note how in parts where a conversational, not tragic or poetical, effect is desired, verse gives place to prose, and *vice versâ*; and how characters which are viewed in a wholly tragic or poetical light normally use verse alone.

Thus—to take some illustrations from one of the most popular of the plays, viz. *Henry V.*—Henry is made to use prose in talking familiarly to his soldiers (III. 6. 102—120), but verse directly afterwards in the formal interview with the French herald (III. 6. 122—181). Prose again is the medium when the French nobles are chatting together in a light bantering style (III. 7. 1—134) and laughing at the English, but verse in their last words together at the moment of riding off to the battle-field (IV. 2), and in the hour of defeat (IV. 5). Perhaps the most striking transition in *Henry V.* from prose to verse occurs at IV. 1. 247, where the reason for the change is self-evident. And the wooing-scene (v. 2) must be remembered. The alternations of verse and prose in a play are often very suggestive, and the reason in each case should be carefully weighed in the light of the context.

Prose is commonly assigned to characters of humble position, e.g. servants and soldiers (such as Bates, Court, Williams in *Henry V.*). It is the normal medium in scenes of “low life”; cf. the Falstaff-scenes in *Henry IV.*

Another conspicuous use of prose in Shakespeare is for comic parts and the speech of comic characters like the Clowns of the Comedies, e.g. Touchstone in *As You Like It*, who never drops into blank verse.

In *Henry V.* the Hostess, Bardolph, Nym and the Boy speak wholly in prose as being at once humorous (three of them unintentionally) and of humble status. The same criticism applies to the Porter’s-scene in *Macbeth* (II. 3. 1—25).

Other minor uses of prose by Shakespeare are for letters (I. 5), proclamations, documents, etc., and occasionally (as though even blank verse were too artificial) for the expression of extreme emotion and mental derangement (cf. *King Lear*, III. 4). So in the sleep-walking scene (v. 1) the prose-form of Lady Macbeth’s part expresses the “great perturbation in nature” from which she is suffering and gives the appropriate effect of broken, disjointed utterance such as might be expected from a somnambulist.

Shakespeare's use of prose increases as the character of his plays grows more varied and complex. Thus, *Richard II.* (1593—1594), written five or six years before *Henry V.* (1599), has no prose. The amount of prose in a play therefore is, as a rule, an indication of its date, like the amount of rhyme, though not so conclusive an indication. But the general character of *Macbeth* makes it an exception to the rule. The scheme of the tragedy did not admit the colloquial and comic, save for those contrasts which to be effective must be infrequent.

## I. INDEX OF WORDS AND PHRASES.

*This List applies to the Notes only; words of which longer explanations are given will be found in the Glossary. The references are to the pages.*

*Abbreviations:* adj. = adjective. intr. = intransitive. n. = noun.  
syll. = syllable or syllables. trans. = transitive. vb = verb.

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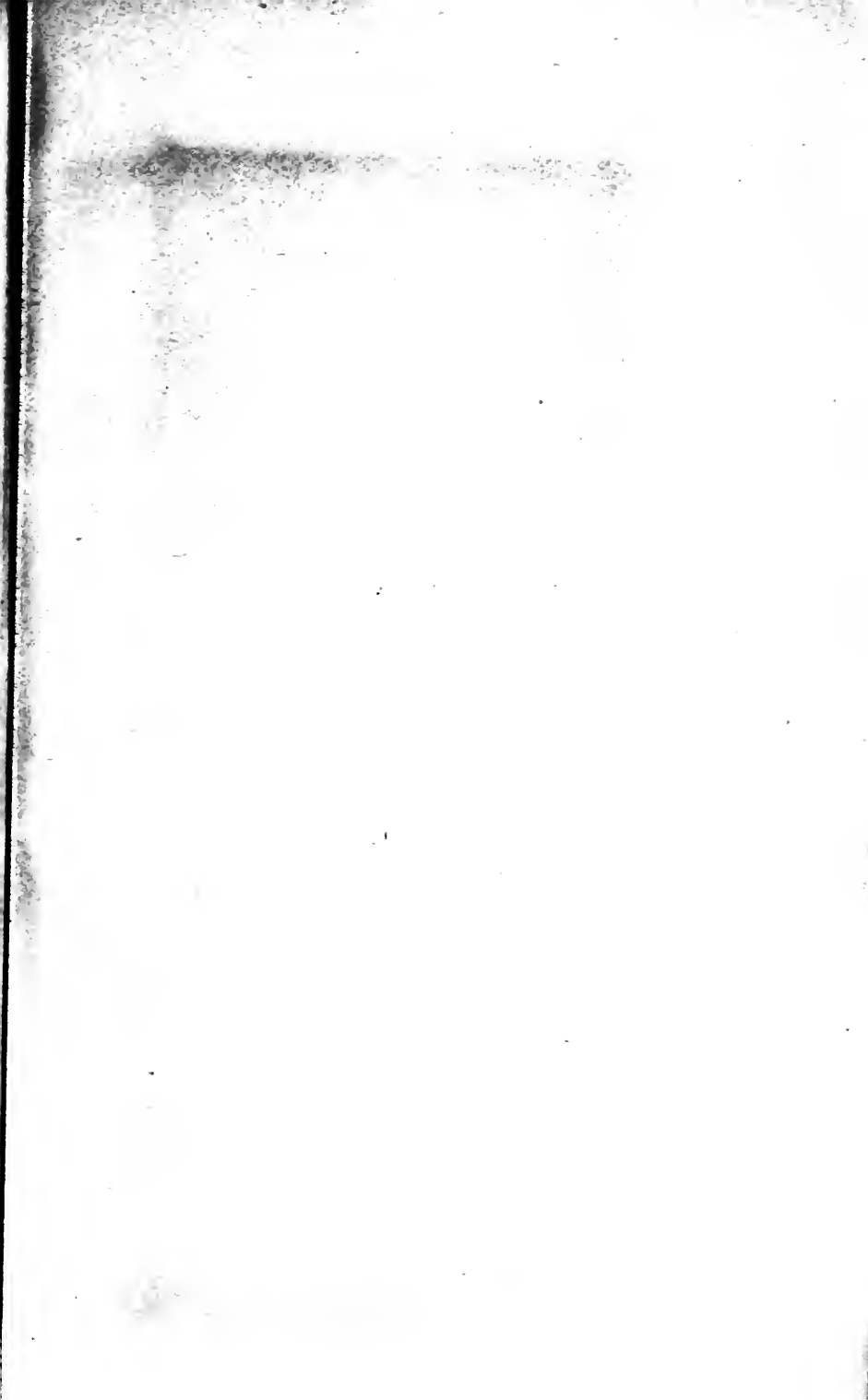
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